THE
RAJNEESH
CHRONICLES

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The True Story of the Cult That Unleashed the First Act of Bioterrorism on U.S. Soil

Edited by
WIN McCORMACK

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> "The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in times of great moral crisis preserve their neutrality."
>
> —DANTE ALIGHIERI

> "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."
>
> —*attributed to* EDMUND BURKE

This edition of ***The Rajneesh Chronicles*** is dedicated to former Mayor of Antelope, Oregon, Margaret Hill; former Oregon Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer; former Oregon Secretary of State Norma Paulus; former U.S. Attorney for Oregon Charles Turner; and former Oregon Congressman Jim Weaver—public officials who, in a time of moral crisis in their state, did something.

INTRODUCTION:

"Moses Five" Revisited

> "Asahara . . . aggressively sought to bring about whatever he predicted. . . . What made Asahara an action prophet was the inseparability of prophecy and action, of what he imagined and what he did."
>
> —ROBERT JAY LIFTON, in *Destroying the World to Save It,* on the leader of the Aum Shinrikyo cult, which in 1995 released the deadly nerve gas sarin in five subway trains in Tokyo

In his 1988 novel, *S.,* in which he credits material included in *The Rajneesh Chronicles* as one of his sources, John Updike tells the story of a housewife in Massachusetts who abandons her husband and middle-class lifestyle to become a "sannyasin" at a religious commune in Arizona presided over by a guru from India. As described in a book-study guide on the Internet, "[l]ife at the commune turns out to be a charade of spiritual enlightenment, a comic rite of sexual initiation, and a wild mixture of jealousy, fraud, embezzlement, and self-deception."

This description fits life at Rancho Rajneesh and the city of Rajneeshpuram in central Oregon during their occupation by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and his cohort from 1981-85 pretty well—though Updike was, of course, creating fiction, as well as applying his characteristic irony to a social situation that, in real life, was not very amusing at all. In real life, the goings-on at this so-called commune were deadly serious, for it was there that the first act of bioterrorism in U.S. history—salmonella poisoning of citizens and officials of Wasco County—was plotted and launched. It was there also that the same nurse who cultured the salmonella bacteria used in that attack endeavored—in a project with the secret code name "Moses Five"—to culture a live AIDS virus, which she must have hoped to use to fulfill the Bhagwan's prophecy that two-thirds of the world's population would ultimately die of that disease.

In his book *To an Unknown God: Religious Freedom on Trial,* legal scholar and former *Washington Post* reporter Garrett Epps (who also credits material in the previous edition of this book as a source) correctly identifies the two stages in the Rajneeshees' assault on their perceived enemies in the outside world. The first stage involved the poisoning with salmonella bacteria of restaurant patrons in The Dalles, the Wasco County seat, in September 1984, in a test run of one component of their plan to take over the county government in the fall election: disabling opposition voters and preventing them from going to the polls.

When that stage failed, they embarked on the second stage, a plot to kill various people on an enemies list they had compiled. This list included Charles Turner, the then-U.S. attorney for Oregon, who was supervising an investigation of them for immigration fraud and other offenses, and Les Zaitz, an *Oregonian* reporter then engaged with two colleagues in an extensive journalistic investigation of the cult spanning three continents. It was assumed at the time that the principal objective of Zaitz's investigation was to nail down proof of the Rajneeshees' direct involvement, abroad as well as in the United States, in more serious criminal activities, such as drug and currency smuggling and possibly even more sinister crimes.

In his chapter detailing the criminal evolution of the Rajneesh cult, entitled "East of Eden," Epps's central focus is on then-Oregon Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer, one of two main subjects of Epps's book, which deals with various conflicts between church and state. Frohnmayer had also made the Rajneeshees' enemies list, as a result of the lawsuit he filed calling for the dismemberment of Rajneespuram on the grounds that the intermeshing of Rajneesh's religious foundation and the operations of the city violated the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution. Frohnmayer began his official attorney general's opinion on the matter with a "sweeping discussion of religious freedom and the demands of a liberal, secular, democratic order in America." In America, Frohnmayer wrote, "[t] olerance is not merely a moral virtue; it is a matter of constitutional policy."

The story of the Rajneeshees in Oregon does raise serious questions about liberal democratic tolerance, and its advisable limits, far beyond the purely religious one. The seeming inability of various governmental entities to deal effectively with the numerous infractions and misbehaviors of the group—its skirting of Oregon's land-use regulations and the land-use permits it was

granted; its flouting of immigration law through obviously bogus marriages between foreign and American sannyasins; its systematic and cruel persecution of the residents of the nearby town of Antelope, of which it had taken control as a fallback if the city of Rajneeshpuram were declared illegal; its arming of commune residents with semiautomatic weapons while its leaders were issuing threats of violence against the surrounding community and law enforcement—suggested a bewildering and alarming paralysis in the American and Oregon political systems.

Such issues are explored in a 1987 senior thesis entitled "Antelope, Oregon and the Need to Revise Liberal Democracies," by Rolf Christen Moan, a student in Harvard College's social studies department whom I had the pleasure to advise on his project. My own analysis, which I freely offered him (as a former student in the government department there), was that the American political system is so fragmented, first between the national and local levels, and then, at each level, between different branches of government and entirely separate departments, that no one entity or political leader or official had the overall authority to confront the fundamental challenge the Rajneeshees presented. Moan, however, mainly concerned himself with the proposition that the tolerance of a liberal democratic system might extend too far, allowing organizations subversive of the public order to operate with dangerous impunity within its borders.

Another Harvard senior thesis of relevance here, also involving issues pertaining to the success or failure of liberal democracy, is "Four Types of Elitist Theory: Bentham, Nietzsche, Lenin, Mosca and the Elite in Liberal-Democratic Thought," submitted to the government department in 1962 by David Braden Frohnmayer (it received a grade of magna cum laude, as did Moan's). Twenty-four years after that submission, Frohnmayer, attorney general of Oregon, was asked by a reporter whether he thought Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh had sanctioned the poisonings his henchwomen carried out. Frohnmayer replied that his familiarity with the ideas of Nietzsche, which he dissected in his senior thesis, had helped him understand Rajneesh's philosophy: "His philosophy is not incompatible with poisoning," Frohnmayer said.

Interestingly, Lewis F. Carter, a sociologist generally adulatory of Rajneesh and his project, also notes in his study *Charisma and Control in Rajneeshuram: The Role of Shared Values in the Creation of a Community*

the similarity between Rajneesh's thought and that of Nietzsche, in particular the parallel between what he calls the "Homo Novus" theme in Rajneesh's proclamations and the idea of the "superman" elaborated in *Thus Spake Zarathustra.* "[Rajneesh's] vision of 'Homo Novus' is based on Nietzsche's ideal of the individual who is absolutely free of family, church, governments and cultures," Carter concludes.

In her book *Germs: Biological Weapons and America's Secret War,* published in 2001, Judith Miller devotes the first chapter, "The Attack," to the Rajneeshees' bioterrorism schemes. Relying heavily on information provided to the authorities in 1985 by David Knapp, aka Swami Krishna Deva, ex-mayor of Rajneeshpuram, and Ava Kay Avalos, aka Ma Ava, a lab assistant to Ma Anand Puja, the Filipina nurse who oversaw the Rajneesh Medical Corporation and its bioterrorism program, Miller carefully reconstructs the project's insane progression.

Before Puja, known at the ranch as "Nurse Mengele," and Ma Anand Sheela, Rajneesh's top assistant, decided on *Salmonella typhimurium,* a common agent in food poisoning, as the means to incapacitate voters in Wasco County, they contemplated using much more dangerous substances. These included *Salmonella typhi,* which causes often-fatal typhoid fever; *Salmonella paratyphi,* which causes a similar, less severe illness; *Francisella tularensis,* which causes a debilitating and sometimes fatal disease, and which was weaponized by U.S. Army scientists in the 1950s and is on the Pentagon's list of agents that might be used in a biological-warfare attack on the nation; and *Shigella dysenteriae,* a very small amount of which can cause severe dysentery resulting in death in 10 to 20 percent of cases.

Puja placed orders for these pathogens on September 25, 1984, just as the Share-A-Home program to import thousands of street people into Rajneeshpuram to register them to vote in the coming election was gearing up. She also ordered antipsychotic drugs such as Haldol to control the street people while they were at the ranch. And she contemplated putting dead rodents—rats, mice, beavers—in the county's water supply to sicken the populace. She apparently had particular confidence in beavers, because they carry a natural pathogen, *Giardia lamblia,* that causes severe diarrhea. *Giardia lamblia* had been prevalent at the Rajneesh ashram in India.

As related in "Bhagwan's Final Year" and in the afterword, "How Close Was Disaster?" when authorities raided the Rajneesh Medical Corporation after the Bhagwan's September 16, 1985, press conference denouncing Sheela, they found the following books: *Handbook for Poisoning; How to Kill; Deadly Substances; The Perfect Crime and How to Commit It;* and *Let Me Die Before I Wake.* They also found articles on infectious diseases, chemical and biological warfare, assassinations, explosives, and terrorism.

Krishna Deva reported to authorities that when Sheela asked their "enlightened master" what should be done about people who opposed his vision, Rajneesh compared himself to Hitler and stated that Hitler had also been misunderstood when he sought to create a "new man." Rajneesh informed them that Hitler was a genius whose only mistake was to invade Russia. Elsewhere, I have drawn attention to the pattern of leaders of destructive cults such as Rajneesh and Charles Manson expressing admiration for Hitler (see my article-cum-interview, "The Manson Girl Who Got Away," in the Evil Issue of *Tin House* magazine, spring 2007). Manson said that Hitler "had the best answer to everything" and was a "tuned-in guy who leveled the karma of the Jews." Need I mention how the Manson Family experiment culminated?

Aum Shinrikyo guru Shoko Asahara was also a keen admirer of Adolph Hitler, and he read significance into the fact that 1999, the year he had selected for his cult to unleash a worldwide apocalypse using biological, chemical, and atomic weapons, was the same year that the German government's postwar ban on *Mein Kampf* would be lifted. Aum Shinrikyo's 1995 sarin attack on the Tokyo subways killed eleven people and injured thousands, but if the cult's medical doctors who developed the gas had managed to produce it in a purer form, the death toll could have reached hundreds of thousands. In the five years prior to the sarin-gas subway attacks, the cult had done test releases of other deadly substances, including *Bacillus anthrax* and botulinum toxin, as well as VX, a nerve gas even deadlier than sarin. Members had also probably been responsible for as many as eighty murders of people inside the organization or connected to it.

How much farther down a similar road might the Rajneesh cult have traveled, if its course had not been interrupted? Would Rajneesh have proven to be an "action prophet," as Robert Jay Lifton has defined that term? At one point in her narrative, Miller focuses on the aspect of the Rajneesh story that

has most haunted me for the last twenty-five years: the program to isolate a live AIDS virus that was underway in the biological-warfare laboratory at the ranch when the commune fortunately collapsed in the fall of 1985.

"Puja was also particularly fascinated by the AIDS virus," Miller writes, "about which relatively little was known at the time. The Bhagwan had said that the virus would destroy two-thirds of the world's population. For Puja, it was a means of control and intimidation. She repeatedly tried to culture it for use as a germ weapon against the cult's ever-growing enemies. Her apparent failure was not for lack of trying."

Neither local health officials nor scientists from the Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, were able to make a definitive determination about the source of the salmonella bacteria that, before the scare was over, sickened around one thousand people in Wasco County; the EIS finally placed tentative blame on food handlers. No one in authority really understood what had happened until Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's revelatory press conference a year later, in which he blamed the act on Sheela, who had just fled the ranch for Europe—no one, that is, except then-Congressman Jim Weaver from Oregon's fourth district.

Jim comes from a midwestern farming background and considers himself an expert on all matters agricultural, including how salmonella bacteria might or might not be disseminated. When he first explained to me, not long after the apparent epidemic occurred, that it is impossible for salmonella bacteria to spread throughout so many different restaurants that have no common linkage, except by deliberate human agency, I was skeptical. Then in January 1986, after the EIS issued its report, he exposed himself to public criticism and ridicule from the press and fellow Oregon liberals when he went on the floor of the House of Representatives and elaborated his interpretation of events in a speech he called "The Town that Was Poisoned" (see Appendix 3, page 309).

The following fall, after Jim had been vindicated and the rest of the Rajneeshees' misdoings were exposed, he and I sat of an evening in his office in the Capitol, sipping chilled martinis and reflecting on this extraordinary and bizarre chapter in the history of Oregon. He fixed me with a stare as intense as the one with which he had regarded me while he was explaining the Rajneesh salmonella plot a year earlier, and he told me that he thought the Rajneeshees would definitely have been capable of using the

other biological and chemical weapons they were trying to develop. This time I did not object.

"This name 'Moses Five,'" he mused. "What do you suppose they meant by that? I think it referred to the Fifth Commandment, 'Thou Shalt Not Kill.'* I think it was a way of indicating that they were very much intending to violate that commandment, that they actually intended to kill a whole lot of people. Whatever it meant to them, there is no doubt in my mind, given their history and trajectory, that if they had been able to develop that AIDS virus, they would have tried to unleash it on the world."

Win McCormack
2010

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*"Thou Shalt Not Murder" is the Fifth Commandment in the Catholic and Lutheran traditions. For Talmudic Judaism, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and other Christian denominations, it is the Sixth Commandment.

FOREWORD

The Biggest Criminal Conspiracy in the History of Oregon

In late June and early July 1981, people wearing bright orange or red clothing and long, beaded necklaces were spotted in the vicinity of Antelope, Oregon, a town of some forty people in the semiarid sagebrush reaches of central Oregon. They were, it was soon learned, disciples or followers of an East Indian guru, pictures of whose beaming, bearded countenance were displayed in lockets dangling from the ends of their necklaces, and they had just purchased the nearby 64,000-acre Big Muddy Ranch straddling Wasco and Jefferson counties for $6 million. Their intention, spokespersons said, was to establish a "simple, agricultural commune."

At the time of the Rajneesh group's arrival, its background was almost completely unknown to most people in Oregon, as was that of its guru, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, who had arrived in the New York City area in early June on a medical visa and would soon join his followers at the ranch. Over the course of the next four and a half years, their activities in central Oregon would become major issues in the state and a near-obsessive preoccupation of many of its citizens. The central issue would be the legitimacy, under the state's land-use laws, of the incorporation of the city of Rajneeshpuram, but intense controversy would also surround the group's treatment of the citizens of Antelope, whose city council it came to control; the immigration status of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and other foreigners living at Rancho Rajneesh; the accumulation of a large store of lethal weapons on the ranch; and the acerbic, bellicose personality of Ma Anand Sheela, the group's chief spokesperson, who repeatedly heaped vituperation on Oregonians for their "bigotry." (In Laguna Beach, California, Rajneesh

representatives would wage another bitter but finally successful battle to wrest ownership of the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach from its original members.) At perhaps the height of the struggle between the Rajneeshees and their opponents in Oregon— during the Share-A-Home program that brought thousands of street people into Rajneeshpuram in September 1984—Sheela, even while denying that the Rajneeshees were scheming to take over Wasco County as they previously had taken over Antelope, shouted at reporters: "Wasco County is so f***ing bigoted it deserves to be taken over."

Despite the ever-escalating belligerence of the Rajneeshees, and despite growing evidence of Rajneesh willingness to flaunt if not defy federal and state statutes, most segments of the press and authorities at all levels of government were slow to react. Until September 1985, when Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh himself brought to light much of the criminal wrongdoing associated with the commune (absolving himself of all responsibility and blaming it entirely on Sheela, who had just fled to Europe), the only serious and direct action taken against the operations of the commune by any government agency was the lawsuit filed in 1983 by the Oregon Attorney General's Office against Rajneeshpuram for violation of separation of church and state and the successful effort of Oregon Secretary of State Norma Paulus to halt the voter registration of street people at the ranch during the Share-A-Home program.

Media representatives—like much of the Oregon intellectual community in general—were in many cases actually sympathetic toward the Rajneesh enterprise, viewing it as both an exercise of the First Amendment right of free exercise of religion and as a noble attempt to fulfill certain mutually shared ideals of community from the 1960s. In December 1982, when the Immigration and Naturalization Service denied Rajneesh the status of religious teacher (later revised), leading KGW-TV commentator and former *Oregonian* columnist Floyd McKay, in a commentary that began "Merry Christmas to the Bhagwan—Sorry, but there's no room at the inn," called the ruling "a charade" that "supports the idea that there are few things more ridiculous than bureaucrats deciding spiritual questions." He also complained that "there is no place in America for the acknowledged spiritual leader of a quarter-million peaceful people" (although Rajneesh claimed a worldwide following of 250,000 to 300,000, the actual number of committed

disciples was 10,000 or less) and declared that "beyond the heavy-handed treatment of the people of Antelope . . . the Bhagwan and his followers have done no harm to this region." When Attorney General David Frohnmayer filed his church-and-state suit the following year, he was taken to task by the *Oregonian* editorial page (which would continue to take the Rajneeshees' side until almost the very end) for picking on a "religious minority." It was not until the summer of 1985—a scant few months before the whole Rajneesh saga in Oregon would abruptly end, and a full four years after it began—that the *Oregonian* finally produced an investigative series about the group. Although providing a trove of interesting background information, it strangely failed to mention the main event: the Rajneeshees' attempt, in the fall of 1984, to influence the results of the elections to the Wasco County Court through a scheme involving the importation of street people into Rajneeshpuram as potential voters, the poisoning of two of the three county commissioners while they were on a visit to the ranch, and the food poisoning of several hundred restaurant patrons in The Dalles. It also overlooked the episode's main import: the grave threat to public safety posed by the Rajneesh Medical Corporation.

Even at the end, when Rajneesh was back at his commune in Pune (Poona), India, and Sheela was in jail, aspects such as the involvement of Rajneeshees in international drug running, the sexual abuse of children at Rajneeshpuram during its heyday, and the possibility that the director of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation had been trying to develop a live AIDS virus for use against dissidents within the commune and the public remained largely unexplored by the press or the government. "It was," an official of the U.S. Customs Service in Portland was to say in retrospect to this writer, "the biggest criminal conspiracy in the history of the state, and no one did a damned thing about it."

Win McCormack
Editor in Chief, *Oregon Magazine*
1986

Chronology of the Rajneesh Cult

ORIGINALLY COMPILED BY BILL DRIVER UPDATED BY ARIANA BOFFEY

Bhagwan Mohan Shree ("God Sir") Rajneesh was born Chandra Rajneesh on December 11, 1931, near Gadarwara in central India. During much of his early childhood, Rajneesh lived with his grandparents. After witnessing the illness and death of his beloved grandfather, the seven-year-old Rajneesh became increasingly preoccupied with death. Among the strange acts he committed over the next few years were following funeral processions, jumping from high bridges into a nearby river, spending the night at a crematorium ground, and lying for several days in a ruined, snake-infested temple waiting for "death to overtake him."

Young Rajneesh, a voracious reader and better-than-average student, entered college and there experienced what he later described as his "enlightenment" on March 21, 1953. After graduate school Rajneesh taught philosophy in two colleges from 1957 to 1966. During that period he also launched his career as a guru, traveling throughout India delivering often controversial lectures on politics, religion, and sex. After becoming successful on the lecture circuit and at various meditation camps, Rajneesh resigned from his teaching positions and became a full-time guru.

He continued speaking throughout India until 1969, when he set up headquarters in Bombay. Ma Yoga Laxmi, whom he had met a year earlier, became his top administrative aide, a position she held until 1981. Rajneesh met a young English woman named Christine Woolf, who adopted the sannyasin name Ma Yoga Vivek. He considered her to be the reincarnation of a childhood girlfriend, and she became his constant personal companion.

1969—74

During the period when his movement was headquartered in a Bombay apartment, Rajneesh took the name Bhagwan (God), began giving his disciples Indian names, and required that they wear orange-colored clothing and malas, necklaces made of 108 wooden beads with a picture of the guru attached.

Rajneesh devised various therapies and exercises supposedly designed to enhance the spiritual development of his followers and students. Westerners from the United States and Europe came to his workshops in increasing numbers. Overcrowding became a problem as Rajneesh's popularity rose.

1974—80

In 1974, Rajneesh set up a commune in Pune (Poona), India, a semi-industrial city located one hundred miles southeast of Bombay. The ashram occupied a fenced, four-acre plot in a residential neighborhood. Rajneesh continued to lecture daily, and a variety of therapies and workshops were offered to followers and visitors. The ashram grew rapidly, with as many as 6,000 sannyasins living in and around the commune. Thousands more visited. Problems began to surface: Indian tax authorities had a running battle with Rajneesh organizations, resulting in revocation of their tax-exempt status and assessment against them of over $5 million in back taxes. Many sannyasins used drugs, and several were arrested trying to smuggle drugs into Europe. Until the practice was stopped in 1979, violence in therapy groups often resulted in broken bones, rapes, and mental breakdowns. Relations between locals and cult members grew increasingly hostile, and an attempt on Rajneesh's life was allegedly made in 1980. Overcrowding became more and more of a problem and efforts, coordinated by Ma Yoga Laxmi, to find land for a larger commune in India repeatedly failed. Some time at the end of 1980 or the beginning of 1981, Ma Anand Sheela, described in the Indian press as a "radical hardliner," assumed the top administrative post at the ashram.

1981

March

Rajneesh fails to appear for morning discourse. Within the ashram hierarchy, secret consideration of moving to the United States begins.

Swami Prem Amitabh, a top Rajneesh psychotherapist, appears for the first time at the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach, where Rajneesh disciples have established a foothold, to conduct Sunday services.

April 11

Rajneesh Press Office announces that Rajneesh has entered the "ultimate stage" of his work and will no longer speak to his disciples.

May 15

Sheela announces to ashram residents they will be moving to a new site in western India. On the same day, Rajneeshees buy a castle in a New Jersey town where Sheela had started a small meditation center several years before.

Rajneesh's doctors claim a serious setback in his medical condition, raising the possibility that emergency surgery outside India may be required.

20th | Unknown to the ashram population, Sheela files an application for a U.S. visitor's visa for Rajneesh.

24 th | Rajneesh landlord entrapped in phony charge of sexual assault involving female sannyasin. (Later, evidence surfaces that this was a tactic often used by Rajneeshees to manipulate people.)

28th | Mysterious fires and bombings occur at Rajneesh properties. Followers blame religious persecution and file arson charges against the landlord and his brother. (Later investigation suggests that Rajneeshees were

responsible for the bombings and fires and that they grossly overestimated damage done for insurance purposes.)

29th | Sheela, Laxmi, and other top corporate officials resign from the board of directors of the Rajneesh Foundation in India. Rajneesh's visa application is approved.

31st | Rajneesh, Sheela, and seventeen others secretly leave Pune (Poona) for Bombay.

June 1

Rajneesh flies to New York City, allegedly to seek medical treatment that will require a three-to-four-month stay in the United States. He then proceeds to "Rajneesh Castle" in New Jersey.

July 10

Rajneeshees announce that they have bought the 64,229-acre Big Muddy Ranch in central Oregon for some $6 million. They say they plan to start a "simple farming community" with about fifty workers.

August

Rajneeshees obtain permission from county authorities to put fifty-four mobile homes on the ranch. Concerns about the sect arise among locals, who contact 1000 Friends of Oregon about possible land-use violations.

4th | The board of trustees of the Church of Religion Science of Laguna Beach—with Ma Yoga Sushila, the top Rajneesh fund-raiser, present to receive the donation—votes four to three to donate the church and all its assets, including the six acres of prime real estate on which it sits, to the Rajneesh Foundation. The board also agrees to take the motion to the full membership of the church for a vote on August 8.

6th | At a morning meeting, the board of trustees of the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach decides not to take the motion to donate the church and its assets to the full membership after all.

At another meeting that evening, the board appoints Swami Prem Amitabh minister pro-tem, even though he has never formally joined the church. The previous minister, also a Rajneeshee, had resigned at the August 4 board meeting.

29th | Rajneesh arrives in Oregon from "Rajneesh Castle" in New Jersey and begins his four-year "visit" at the ranch.

September 3

At a specially called meeting, the old-line Religious Scientists charge Rajneeshee-dominated board of trustees of Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach with incompetence and with operating illegally, and demand the resignations of all its members. All comply except Swami Prem Amitabh, the putative minister pro-tem.

27th | Rajneeshee members elect a new board of trustees of the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach composed entirely of Rajneeshees. Swami Prem Amitabh is declared full-fledged minister. A few days later, security guards bar old-line church members from entering the property. Subsequently, a group of old-line members files suit against the Rajneeshees, alleging that the international Rajneesh leadership masterminded the takeover of the church; the Rajneeshees file a countersuit claiming interference by the Religious Scientists with church property and business.

October 14

Rajneeshees file a petition to hold an incorporation election at Rancho Rajneesh. Negotiations with Wasco County officials regarding incorporation coincide with business negotiations between top county official Rick Cantrell and Rajneeshees.

Rajneesh gets an extension of his visitor's visa.

November 4

Wasco County gives Rajneeshees permission to hold the incorporation election; Cantrell, who votes in favor of allowing the election, fails to disclose his business dealings with the sect.

Rajneesh requests permanent residency in the United States.

December

1000 Friends of Oregon files a lawsuit claiming Wasco County approval of an incorporation election violated the state's land-use laws.

1982

March

Antelope City Council votes to hold a disincorporation election in thirty days. Old-timers cite fear that an influx of Rajneeshees will eventually give the sect political control over the tiny town and tax and police powers over the old-timers. Tensions have been increasing between the two sides for months.

Oregon State Ethics Commission drops charges of misconduct against Rick Cantrell, citing insufficient evidence and funding to proceed with the investigation.

April 15

With national and international media looking on, Rajneesh voters vote down the disincorporation attempt.

May

Fearing an eventual Rajneesh takeover of their town, Antelope City Council gives the title of Community Church to the Eastern Diocese of Oregon

Episcopal Church.

Wasco County Planning Director Dorothy Brown resigns after giving the Rajneeshees over one hundred supposedly farm-related building permits in the previous ten months.

Rajneeshees vote 154–0 to incorporate a city on their ranch. Wasco County Circuit Court Judge John Jelderks denies a 1000 Friends of Oregon motion to delay the incorporation pending outcome of their litigation. Jelderks, however, does give the Rajneeshees the first of several warnings that they will be developing the city at their own risk and that buildings might be subject to removal if incorporation is deemed improper by an appeals court.

July

Rajneeshees and Antelope City Council sign an agreement that, in part, is designed to prevent a Rajneeshee-dominated council from taxing old-timers out of their homes.

Following an appearance on *The Merv Griffin Show* by Ma Anand Sheela and Antelope community resident Rosemary McGreer, Rajneeshees sue McGreer in a much-publicized libel suit. The suit quiets many critics of the Rajneeshees.

August

Rajneesheepuram city officials take office and development of the city begins.

November

Rajneeshees are elected to four of seven positions on Antelope City Council.

1983

January

Rajneeshee-dominated Antelope City Council takes office and appoints two Rajneeshees to vacant council positions. They now have six of seven council seats.

February

The "Wild Geese," a group of renegade Rajneesh disciples who left Rancho Rajneesh in a truck under the cover of darkness, issue a circular denouncing the Rajneesh Foundation International. The circular accuses RFI of plotting to avoid taxes, of arranging "marriages of convenience" between American and foreign disciples, and of "looking at possibilities of gaining control of the counties in which Rajneeshpuram is located," and calls upon RFI leaders to return power in Antelope to its previous citizens and give back the Utsava Rajneesh Meditation Center in Laguna Beach (formerly the Church of Religious Science) to "its rightful owners."

March

The Oregon State Court of Appeals refers questions regarding Wasco County's approval of an incorporation election at Rancho Rajneesh back to the state's Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA), reopening the question of Rajneeshpuram's legal status.

April

Antelope City Council passes a series of ordinances providing for numerous service contracts with various Rajneeshpuram organizations. The cost of the services results in the imposition of high property taxes.

May

Antelope City Council sues former council members in an effort to gain control of Antelope Community Church.

Rajneeshees offer to move out of Antelope if the state legislature passes special legislation making Rajneeshpuram a legal city. The proposal is rejected by the legislature.

June

Two journalists are arrested in Antelope by the Rajneeshpuram Peace Force, one for trespassing, the other for illegal taping. Both had written critical articles about the group.

Charges are dropped by a Wasco County grand jury four weeks later.

July

A California man plants bombs that explode at Hotel Rajneesh in Portland, injuring him and doing some $200,000 damage to the hotel. Rajneeshees blame the bigotry of Oregonians and begin searching all people going into their central Oregon commune.

August

Two California men are arrested in Rajneeshpuram based on Sheela's allegation that they tried to extort money from her. They spend twelve days in Wasco County jail, then the grand jury drops charges against them. (Both later file lawsuits against Sheela and the city of Rajneeshpuram.)

Without consulting Wasco County, the city of Rajneeshpuram annexes 119 acres of land and immediately begins issuing permits for major building projects in the area. Wasco County protests, claiming the annexation violates land-use laws.

September

Rajneeshees take over the Antelope School District.

LUBA finds that proper land-use procedure was not followed by Wasco County when it approved the incorporation election at Rancho Rajneesh on

November 4, 1981, and remands the incorporation question back to the county.

October

Judge Jelderks issues an order designed to "preserve the status quo" in terms of development at Rajneeshpuram.

Orange County Superior Court Judge William Sheffield grants a motion by the Rajneeshees for a summary judgment in the lawsuit filed against them by former members and officers of the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach. Sheffield dismisses the Rajneesh Foundation International as a defendant in the case, ruling that there is no evidence to show that RFI (formerly the Chidvilas Rajneesh Meditation Center of New Jersey) was involved in a conspiracy to take over the church. Subsequent Superior Court rulings will dismiss Ma Anand Sheela, Ma Yoga Sushila, and Swami Prem Niren as defendants in the case, but attorneys for the Religious Scientists will see Sheffield's ruling as the turning point because it undermines their theory of corporate conspiracy.

November

Antelope resident Jim Opray leads protests against the surveillance of old-timers by Rajneeshpuram on the grounds that it violates constitutional provisions requiring the separation of church and state.

December

Antelope City Council votes to contract with Rajneeshpuram for police patrols in Antelope.

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is ruled in default by a Multnomah County judge for refusing to appear for deposition in a defamation suit filed against various Rajneeshees by Rosemary McGreer.

1984

February

LUBA finds that Rajneeshpuram did not follow proper land-use procedure when it annexed 119 acres.

March

A three-judge panel of the State Court of Appeals reverses LUBA's ruling that the incorporation of Rajneeshpuram was improperly done.

Antelope City Council changes the names of city streets and buildings. Main Street is named Melvana Bhagwan, and the recycling center becomes the Adolf Hitler Recycling Center.

Rajneeshees are ordered to pay $75,000 to Antelope resident Rosemary McGreer for defaming her.

April

A hearing is held to decide ownership of the Antelope Community Church. A decision made three months later sides with the old-timers.

June

The court of appeals, upon reconsideration, reverses the three-judge panel and finds that LUBA was correct in ruling that Rajneeshpuram incorporation and annexation were improper.

Members of Rajneeshpuram police force enter Jim Opray's home without search or arrest warrants and arrest him for "menacing." Charges are immediately dropped by the Wasco County district attorney.

July

In documents filed in federal court, the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the U.S. Attorney's Office confirm the existence of a major criminal investigation of Rajneeshees.

Reports of weapons stockpiling by Rajneeshees surface. Heavily armed guards appear at Rancho Rajneesh.

August

Following an inspection trip to Rajneeshpuram, during which he drinks water provided to him by a representative of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation, Wasco County Executive Bill Hulse gets food poisoning and nearly dies from the presence of a "highly toxic substance" in his kidneys.

September

Rajneeshees begin busing thousands of street people from around the United States to Rajneeshpuram. They say the "Share-A-Home" program is a humanitarian effort to help the poor; most outsiders feel it is an effort to increase Rajneesh voting power and take control of the Wasco County government in November elections.

Many street people are housed in so-called winterized tents at Rajneeshpuram. Attempts by Wasco County officials to inspect the structures for compliance with court orders prohibiting development in the city are thwarted by Rajneesh vehicles "accidentally" blocking roads.

A mysterious outbreak of salmonella food poisoning begins in The Dalles, resulting in the infection of over eight hundred people, many of whom are hospitalized.

Rajneeshees buy a huge dormitory-like housing development and begin reconstructing it in Antelope. Antelope City Council votes to form its own police force.

The official name of Antelope is changed to City of Rajneesh.

Sheela says Wasco County "is so f***ing bigoted that it deserves to be taken over."

Street people leaving Rajneeshpuram tell the media that Share-A-Home is designed to help Rajneeshees take over the county.

October 1

An Albany group announces plans to bring non-Rajneeshee voters to Wasco County for the November election.

5th | Sheela announces two Rajneeshees will run as write-in candidates for contested county commission seats.

10th | Voter registration is halted by Secretary of State Norma Paulus due to "probability of election fraud."

3rd | Paulus announces a plan for a special voter registration process for anyone trying to register in Wasco County.

17th | Last day to meet twenty-day Oregon residency requirement for voting in November elections.

Saying the timing is only a coincidence, Rajneeshees announce an end to Share-A-Home recruiting.

A federal judge upholds the use of special voter registration hearings, saying there is justifiable reason to believe voter fraud might take place.

26th | Ma Deva Jayamala, one of two Rajneesh write-in candidates for county commissioner, announces she will not run.

30th | Rajneesh breaks his three-and-a-half-year vow of silence and begins lecturing again.

November 1

Rajneeshees boycott voter registration hearings, saying they cannot afford to bus would-be registrants to The Dalles.

4 **th** | Rajneeshees boycott federal, state, and county elections. The results leave three people who have been very critical of the sect on the county commission. Rajneeshees challenge 2,000 voters.

5 **th** | Rajneesh says it might have been better if he had not come to the United States.

Rajneeshpuram Mayor Swami Krishna Deva says Rajneeshees will not follow through with voter challenges because of the desire to "peacefully

coexist" in Wasco County.

Sheela says the whole street people/election controversy was just a joke and that people do not understand her sense of humor.

Antelope city tax rate for 1984–85 is $19.80 per thousand dollars of evaluation; total property tax rate is $33.63. Prior to Rajneesh takeover, property taxes were zero for the city and $10.69 overall.

December

Judge Jelderks orders that the winterized tents be dismantled because they violate previous court orders.

The state of Oregon fines the Rajneeshees over $1 million for alleged violation of electrical codes in regard to illegal structures. (Rajneeshees appeal both fines.)

1985

January

Arson fire breaks out at Wasco County Planning Office, where records of land-use cases involving Rajneeshpuram are stored.

April

An article in the May issue of *Oregon Magazine* reporting allegations of neglect and sexual abuse of children at Rancho Rajneesh leads Diane McDonald of Madras to petition the Wasco County Circuit Court to investigate the treatment and condition of children there. Her petition is eventually thrown out of court when investigators are stymied by the refusal of Rajneesh officials to cooperate.

May

A U.S. District Court in Portland awards $1.7 million, including $1.25 million in punitive damages, to former Rajneesh disciple Helen C. Byron, deciding that Ma Anand Sheela had defrauded her of money in India. The Rajneeshees put up the Utsava Rajneesh Meditation Center in Laguna Beach (formerly the Church of Religious Science) as collateral against the judgment pending an appeal.

June

Rajneeshees file a lawsuit against twenty-seven state and local officials, from Wasco County Planning Office employees to Governor Vic Atiyeh. The suit alleges that those named in it conspired to violate the civil rights of Rajneeshees and requests a court order forcing them to cease a variety of alleged illegal activities.

Rajneeshees also file a similar lawsuit naming various federal officials, including local INS personnel and U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese.

July

The Oregon Supreme Court finds partially in favor of the Rajneesh claim that the incorporation of Rajneeshpuram was proper, but refers two major questions back to LUBA. The first is whether Cantrell's business dealings with Rajneeshees resulted in an "impartial tribunal" at the original incorporation hearing. The other question is whether the land-use goal of preserving agricultural lands was properly addressed.

Antelope residents announce the formation of the Antelope Defense Fund. A statewide initiative petition drive is launched to place the Antelope disincorporation question before voters in the November 1986 election. Supporters say this is the only way to stop Rajneesh misuse of municipal powers.

September

The Oregon Supreme Court finds that the annexation of 119 acres by the city of Rajneeshpuram in August 1983 was invalid because Wasco County was

not consulted, as required by land-use law. The decision could result in an order to dismantle or stop the use of many major buildings in the area.

14th | Ma Anand Sheela, Rajneeshpuram Mayor Swami Krishna Deva, three members of the city council, the city judge, and several top Rajneesh corporate officials, including financial manager Ma Prem Savita and Rajneesh Medical Corporation Director Ma Anand Puja, resign their positions and leave Rajneeshpuram.

15th | Ma Prem Hasya replaces Sheela as Bhagwan's personal secretary and president of RFI. Dhyan John becomes the new president of the Rajneesh Investment Corporation and the group's chief financial advisor. Swami Prem Niren becomes the new mayor of Rajneeshpuram.

16th | Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh begins accusing Sheela and "her gang" of a wide variety of crimes, including attempted murder by poisoning of his private doctor, dentist, and caretaker; attempted murder by poisoning of Jefferson County District Attorney Mike Sullivan and Wasco County Executive Bill Hulse; attempts to poison the water supply of The Dalles and causing the 1984 salmonella outbreak; stealing between $40 million and $55 million from Rajneesh organizations; committing arson at Wasco County Planning Office; and plotting to bomb the Wasco County Courthouse. Rajneesh urges authorities to prosecute Sheela and others responsible.

Rajneesh also accuses Sheela of being responsible for turning the commune into a "fascist concentration camp" and creating friction with Oregonians. The guru denies responsibility for, or knowledge of, Sheela's crimes and tactics and states a desire to end hostilities with Oregonians and the authorities. The guru expresses the desire to have Rajneeshees leave Rajneesh/Antelope.

Dozens of local, state, and federal investigators go to the commune and begin a wide-scale inquiry into the allegations made by Rajneesh.

Rajneesh gives sannyasins permission to stop wearing malas and red-colored clothing and announces the end of the religion of Rajneeshism.

26th | Police investigating wiretapping at Rancho Rajneesh say evidence reveals "possibly the largest wiretapping incident in the history of Oregon."

27th | Interviewed in West Germany, Sheela says she fears for her life because of what she knows about the Rajneesh group. Also, she accuses the new leadership at the Oregon commune of widespread drug use. She adds that she did not take any commune funds, but that a shortage existed because of Rajneesh's expensive tastes for cars and jewelry.

Law enforcement officials at the commune investigating the allegations made by Rajneesh continue to complain of limited cooperation by Rajneeshees. Rajneesh refuses to be interviewed by police unless television cameras are present.

October 1

Dozens of Rajneeshees receive subpoenas to testify before a Wasco County grand jury investigating wiretapping at the commune.

Thousands of copies of *The Book of Rajneeshism* are burned at the commune crematorium following Rajneesh's announcement that the religion of Rajneeshism no longer exists. After the burning, Rajneesh appears on ABC's *Nightline* and demands that Attorney General David Frohnmayer drop his lawsuit contending that Rajneeshpuram violated the separation of church and state.

2nd | State and federal investigators, armed with search warrants, search buildings at the commune and find evidence of an apparent biological-warfare laboratory.

Sheela accuses Rajneesh of using large quantities of valium and nitrous oxide.

6th | Rajneesh receives a subpoena to appear before a federal grand jury, but obtains a thirty-day delay in appearance date.

13th | Robert Black, a Rajneeshee also known as Swami Hrydaya, is arrested in Vancouver, B.C., on charges of large-scale cocaine and currency smuggling.

15th | Rajneeshees announce that their Portland hotel, several of their airplanes, and various properties in Antelope/Rajneesh are for sale. There is

speculation that the sales indicate a possible relocation by the cult.

A Wasco County grand jury begins hearing testimony about attempted murder cases at Rajneeshpuram.

18th | A Hood River County jury finds Sheela guilty of outrageous conduct for her October 1983 verbal attack on former Antelope resident Marsha Wichelmann. The jury finds Sheela liable for $625,000 in damages.

20th | Reports surface that former Rajneeshees were drugged by Sheela and others when they indicated they wanted to leave the commune.

25th | Navy scuba divers join a continuing search of two lakes at Rancho Rajneesh. Divers are reportedly searching for weapons.

28th | Rajneesh is arrested by federal agents in Charlotte, North Carolina, while attempting to fly to Bermuda with several of his followers in chartered Learjets. The guru is charged with thirty-five felony violations of immigration law and with fleeing to avoid prosecution. The immigration charges had been handed down in a secret indictment five days before. Rajneesh is held in jail pending a bail hearing.

Sheela, Puju, and Shanti Bhandra are arrested in West Germany for the attempted murder of the Bhagwan's doctor.

29th | Interviewed in jail, Rajneesh says he will leave the United States as soon as possible.

31st | *The Oregonian* reports that an informant has told investigators that Sheela and others had planned to kill U.S. Attorney Charles Turner, Attorney General David Frohnmayer, and several others before abandoning the scheme. The same informant reportedly told investigators that the September 1983 salmonella poisonings in The Dalles were only a test and that a more extensive poisoning had been planned to occur just prior to the November elections.

November 1

A federal judge in North Carolina refuses to release Rajneesh on bail.

5th | Antelope/Rajneesh residents vote to change the town's name back to Antelope. Rajneeshees claim the vote is part of their effort to improve relations with old-timers.

7th | Rajneesh arrives back in Oregon in the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service.

8th | Rajneesh, released on $500,000 bail, returns to Rancho Rajneesh after eleven days in jail. Rajneesh pleads not guilty to immigration charges.

12th | Rajneesh-dominated Antelope City Council votes to disband the town police force.

14th | Rajneesh appears in federal court and pleads guilty to two of the thirty-five immigration charges pending against him. Under an agreement with the U.S. Attorney's Office, Rajneesh is given a ten-year suspended sentence, five years probation to be served outside the United States, and $400,000 in fines and prosecution costs. Informed that his plea might forbid him from ever returning to the Untied States, Rajneesh tells the judge, "I never want to return." He leaves the country, bound for India, immediately after the court hearing.

22nd | Rajneeshees announce that Rajneeshpuram will close down and the property of Rancho Rajneesh will be sold.

Former Rajneeshpuram Mayor Swami Krishna Deva (aka David Knapp) pleads guilty to state racketeering charges. Deva agrees to cooperate fully with state and federal investigators and, due to concerns for his safety, is placed in the Federal Witness Protection Program.

29th | Texas car dealer Robert Roethlisberger buys eighty-four of Rajneesh's Rolls-Royces.

December 5

The state of Oregon files complex RICO (racketeering) charges against twenty-six Rajneesh corporations and organizations, alleging widespread criminal activity.

10th | In a lawsuit filed by Attorney General Frohnmayer, U.S. District Judge Helen J. Frye rules that the incorporation of the city of Rajneeshpuram was invalid because it violated First Amendment guarantees of separation of church and state.

13th | Five Rajneeshees, including Ma Prem Karuna, former mayor of Antelope, plead guilty to immigration charges.

Non-Rajneeshees are sworn in as mayor and city council members in Antelope.

20th | A federal grand jury in Portland returns a five-count conspiracy indictment naming twenty-one Rajneeshees and former Rajneeshees as defendants in an elaborate scheme to illegally intercept wire and oral communications in Rajneeshpuram. Among those indicted are Ma Anand Sheela; Ma Anand Puja, former vice president of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation; Ma Anand Su, former manager of the Rajneesh Investment Corporation; Ma Yoga Vidya, former president of the Rajneesh Neo-Sannyas International Commune; Ma Prem Savita, a former trustee of the Rajneesh Financial Services Trust; and Krishna Deva, former mayor of Rajneeshpuram. The indictment alleges that a listening post was maintained at Rajneeshpuram with the capability to monitor and record all incoming and outgoing telephone calls, and that various rooms and buildings were also bugged in what Oregon Attorney General Frohnmayer calls "the largest illegal wiretapping scheme in the history of the United States."

1986

February 6

Sheela, Puja, and Bhadra are returned to Oregon from West Germany to face criminal charges.

March 19

Sheela and Puja, one of Sheela's closest advisors and the former director of the Rajneesh Medical Clinic, are indicted by a federal grand jury for conspiracy in the salmonella poisoning of some 619 people in The Dalles prior to the November 1985 elections. The indictment alleges that the purpose of the poisonings, which took place in ten different restaurants in The Dalles, was to learn if a large number of potential voters in Wasco County could be incapacitated and rendered unable to vote in the election. Also alleged is that Puja maintained a secret laboratory at Rajneeshpuram in which salmonella bacteria were cultured. The bacteria were placed in The Dalles restaurants by Puja, Sheela, then Rajneeshpuram Mayor Krishna Deva, and others.

April 17

Rajneesh is given permission by the government of Uruguay to stay in the country for one year. Before arriving in Uruguay, Rajneesh had been expelled from Greece and had been refused permission to stay in Spain and Ireland.

May 16

Multnomah County makes a $500,000 down payment and agrees to pay $1.1 million more for the Hotel Rajneesh in Portland, planning to convert it into a restitution center for convicted felons.

June

Non-Rajneesh residents of Antelope vote nineteen to ten against disincorporating the tiny town. Some residents had felt disincorporation was needed to prevent future Rajneesh-style takeovers.

July 13

Wasco County residents dedicate a bronze antelope on the grounds of the Wasco County Courthouse in commemoration of their battles with the Rajneeshees. A marker on the pedestal reads "Dedicated to all who

steadfastly and unwaveringly opposed the attempts of the Rajneesh followers to take political control of Wasco County, 1981–85." Earlier in the day a flagpole, also funded by donations, is dedicated in Antelope. A bronze plaque at the base of the pole carries an inscription attributed to British statesman Edmund Burke: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

22nd | Sheela and Puja plead guilty to federal charges of illegal wiretapping and salmonella poisoning. Sheela also pleads guilty to federal charges of immigration fraud. Under the terms of plea agreements, District Court Judge Edward Leavy sentences each woman to four and a half years in prison. Sheela is also fined $200,000 and ordered to surrender her alien registration card to immigration officials, a move that will probably prevent her from staying in or ever again visiting the United States following her release from prison. During the proceeding, federal prosecutors tell the court that, during the salmonella poisoning efforts, Sheela once said to Puja, "Let's have some fun," just prior to pouring the bacteria over the lettuce in the produce section of a supermarket in The Dalles.

Later the same day, Sheela, Puja, and Ma Shanti Bhadra plead guilty to state charges that they poisoned Wasco County Commissioners William Hulse and Ray Matthews. In addition, Sheela pleads guilty to taking part in an arson fire at the Wasco County Planning Office. Sheela and Puja are given twenty-year sentences and Bhadra is given ten years. Due to state parole procedures and the fact that state and federal sentences are to be served concurrently, prosecutors predict that Sheela and Puja will serve about four and a half years and Bhadra about two and a half. Part of the women's plea agreement is the stipulation that they will serve their time in a federal prison in Pleasanton, California, a medium-security, coed facility described by one U.S. marshall as the "country club of the federal prison system."

August 6

The Oregon Court of Appeals rules that the November 1981 decision by the Wasco County Court to allow an incorporation election at Rancho Rajneesh was invalid because then Commissioner Rick Cantrell failed to disclose his business dealings with the Rajneeshees prior to the vote.

15th | Attorney General Frohnmayer announces that a settlement has been reached between the state and federal authorities, several private attorneys representing parties with pending civil actions against the Rajneeshees, and Rajneesh corporations. As part of the settlement, the Rajneeshees agree to pay some $5 million to the state, to owners of restaurants in The Dalles where salmonella was used to poison patrons, and to individual victims of the poisonings. The level of the agreed-upon payments is contingent upon the sale price of Rancho Rajneesh. The Rajneeshees also agree to drop their appeal of the federal court ruling that Rajneeshpuram was an illegal entity because it violated constitutional provisions separating church and state.

21st | Wasco County Court commissioners William Hulse and Ray Matthews, to whose poisoning with salmonella bacteria Sheela and Puja have pleaded guilty, file an $800,000 lawsuit against them and six Rajneesh corporations.

25th | Utsava Rajneesh Meditation Center in Laguna Beach is sold for approximately $900,000 to a couple who plan to start a child-care center on the property. When the sale is announced publicly on October 18, it is revealed that earlier in the year the Rajneeshees and former members and officers of the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach reached a settlement, under the terms of which the Religious Scientists agreed to pay the Rajneeshees approximately $20,000 and to withdraw all future claims against the property, and the Rajneeshees in turn agreed to drop all future claims against the Religious Scientists.

October

Rajneesh arrives back in Bombay after being ordered out of several countries, including Uruguay, Jamaica, and Portugal, during the previous five months.

November 24

David Knapp (formerly Swami Krishna Deva) is sentenced for state and federal crimes to which he had pleaded guilty one year before. Ignoring the

prosecutor's request that Knapp not be given prison time because of his cooperation with authorities, District Court Judge Edward Leavy sentences him to two years in jail.

26th | Citing the plaintiff's failure to meet various deadlines for filing papers, a federal court judge in Portland dismisses a $50 lawsuit filed against various Rajneesh corporations by street people involved in the October 1984 Share-A-Home Program.

December 19

Ma Prem Patipada, former Rajneeshpuram City Council member, pleads guilty to illegal wiretapping charges brought against her and twenty others almost one year before. She is the eleventh former Rajneeshee to plead guilty in the case. Ten others remain fugitives. Her plea means that a total of eighteen current and former Rajneeshees have been convicted of crimes in Oregon.

1987

January 17

Rajneesh wins a court case in Pune (Poona), India, allowing him to remain—temporarily at least—at the commune he left in May 1981. The mayor of Pune states publicly about him: "His conduct and loving behavior cannot and have never created any legal problems nor has he ever been found guilty in any provisions of criminal law."

October 27

The Oregon Attorney General's office starts distributing $295,458 in compensation to the victims of the salmonella outbreak in The Dalles.

December 25

Bhagwan demands that followers bring an AIDS-test certificate no older than one month if they are to reside with him at the ashram in Pune. In India, guards no longer carry guns, but whistles, "to warn residents of any danger," says Swami Chaitanya Kirti.

1988

February 26

Swami Prem Niren claims that Bhagwan was poisoned while in federal prison, causing his health to deteriorate.

December 13

Ma Anand Sheela is released from a California prison, after serving twenty-nine months, and deported. A spokesman for the San Diego jail announces: "She was released at 8:45 AM to the custody of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service." Sheela leaves the country alone, heading for Frankfurt, West Germany.

22nd | The Connecticut General Life Insurance Co., the chief lienholder on the former commune site, forecloses on the mortgage of Rancho Rajneesh. Connecticut General hopes to recover more than $3.75 million, plus over $2,000 in interest. The Rajneesh Investment Corporation and other Rajneesh organizations still owe Wasco County about $800 in property and personal taxes on the ranch. The Rajneeshees' last partial payment on the ranch was made six months after the dissolution of the commune.

28th | In a statement from Rajneesh's commune in Pune, (Poona), India, officials for the group declare that Rajneesh's new name is Gautama the Buddha. Rajneesh claims that Katzue Ishira, a Japanese "prophetess" of the Zen branch of Buddhism, recently declared him to be a reincarnation of the

Buddha, and that he accepts her pronouncement. “From now onward, I am Gautama the Buddha,” he says. “With great love and respect, I accept Ishira’s prophesy.”

1989

November 8

The Bhagwan tells Indian voters that the country does not need political parties and that any election candidate who asks for votes should be denied them.

December 13

Ma Yoga Vivek, aka Christine Woolf, dies in a hospital in Pune (Poona), India, of a suspected overdose of sleeping pills. She was no longer Bhagwan’s personal caretaker and mistress, nor was she an active member of the commune.

1990

January 19

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh dies at fifty-eight in Pune (Poona), India. His followers announce the cause of death as heart failure.

February 2

The federal government files a $12.3 million tax lien against the Rajneesh Neo-Sannyas International in a federal court in Portland, Oregon. The lien covers the years 1983 and 1984.

June 28

Dhyan Yogini, aka Alma Peralta, the former bodyguard of Ma Anand Sheela, is interviewed about her role in the plot to assassinate U.S. Attorney Charles Turner. She agrees to testify against the other defendants.

September 10

A New Hampshire real estate company with the option to buy the former Rancho Rajneesh agrees to close sale by January 10, 1991.

11th | Dhyan Yogini pleads guilty to conspiracy to murder Charles Turner. She is sentenced to only two years.

14th | Four former Rajneeshees involved in the conspiracy to murder Turner are arrested: Ann Phyllis McCarthy in South Africa, Susan Lissanevitch in England, and Catherine Jane Stubbs and Richard Langford in Germany. They all await probable extradition.

October 4

Carol Matthews, aka Prem Samadhi, is taken into custody by German police.

30th | Sally Ann Croft is arrested in England after surrendering to the police. She is the sixth defendent to be arrested for involvement in the plot to kill U.S. Attorney Charles Turner.

1991

January

A group of New Hampshire investors plans to buy the former Rancho Rajneesh.

March 22

Dispute over the registration cut-off date for voters continues as the "motor-voter" bill is passed. The motor-voter law is designed to boost voter turnout by providing voter registration forms at Motor Vehicles sites to people applying for driver's licenses. The forms would also be sent through the mail with license renewal notices. Those who still feel the sting of the Rajneesh voter registration effort are opposed to making the registration process more lax. Some suggest that Oregon's liberal registration laws may have left Wasco County open to the "large-scale assault on the process" that their government experienced.

April 12

Richard Langford, aka Swami Anugiten, and Carol Matthews, aka Prem Samadhi are flown to Portland from Frankfurt, Germany, under the guard of U.S. marshals.

15th | Langford and Matthews plead innocent to the charge of involvement in the plot to assassinate U.S. Attorney Charles Turner and the wiretapping scheme at Rajneeshpuram.

26th | Langford changes his plea to guilty in exchange for a five-year prison term and dismissal of firearms and wiretapping charges. He also agrees to testify against the other six members of the alleged murder conspiracy. Judge Malcolm Marsh accepts the plea deal conditionally and wants to see the presentence report. He sets sentencing for July 8. If Marsh imposes a sentence greater than five years, Langford can withdraw his guilty plea and go to trial.

May 3

Matthews has a detention hearing at 9:30 AM. She is seeking a conditional release until trial.

29th | Inland Properties Inc., a company belonging to Montana multimillionaire Dennis Washington, buys the former Rancho Rajneesh from Connecticut General Life Insurance Co. The asking price was 4.7 million, which included 1.5 million in back taxes owed to Wasco County. Washington ends up paying 3.65 million.

June

The United States files documents with the higher regional court in Karlsruhe, Germany, to persuade them to extradite Catherine Jane Stubbs back to Oregon. The documents reveal crucial information about the Rajneeshees' scheme to assassinate U.S. Attorney Charles Turner. A government affidavit reveals that the seven accused in the Turner plot were all members of an elite, paramilitary corps called "The 38." This group was "trained in commando tactics, using Uzi semiautomatic rifles and handguns." The Karlsruhe documents also disclose that according to Krishna Deva, the Rajneeshees possessed privileged information on Turner's investigation from a federal employee who sympathized with them. Chief Criminal Assistant U.S. Attorney Baron C. Sheldahl states that the informant was not in the U.S. Attorney's office; "We know who it is and he has been investigated," he says. Sheldahl refuses to identify the person and says, "He has not been charged." Also in the documents are revelations from unindicted coconspirator Diva Ritka, aka Phyllis Caldwell, giving details about the group's trip to Texas to purchase guns.

July 9

The German higher regional court refuses to extradite Stubbs on the grounds that she had "withdrawn from the alleged murder conspiracy and could not be returned to Portland to face federal murder conspiracy and firearms charges." Stubbs claims that the conspiracy and her role in it ended when she and other members of Rajneesh's inner circle left the country in 1985, when the commune imploded.

16th | Matthews enters an Alford plea, in which the defendant consents to a judgment of conviction and penalties without admitting guilt or having to go to trial, before U.S. District Judge Malcolm F. Marsh. Marsh must impose no fine and a maximum prison term of five years. If Marsh refuses to impose that sentence at a hearing scheduled for Oct. 8, Matthews can withdraw her plea.

November 18

Matthews is sentenced to five years in prison for the Turner conspiracy, the maximum amount allowed by the Alford plea, and a concurrent five-year term for wiretapping.

1992

April 17

After spending $100,000 developing a request for a new zone classification allowing use of the buildings on the former commune site, Dennis Washington decides he will accept the exclusive farm-use zoning classification.

May 15

The Wasco County Planning Commission votes to recommend that the former Rajneeshpuram be zoned for farm use only.

July 24

Inland Properties' lease of about 2385 acres of the former Rancho Rajneesh to the nonprofit organization the Science Ranch Inc. is in the final negotiating stages.

October 3

Susan Lissanevitch, aka Anand Su, and Sally Ann Croft, aka Prem Savita, request that a British appellate court set aside their extradition on account of a poll taken in Oregon indicating that they would not receive a fair trial there because of their religious beliefs. British government officials are given no other information about this supposed poll.

21st | Governor Vic Atiyeh discloses that he carried two unsigned executive orders with him throughout the Rajneesh occupation of Antelope and Big Muddy Ranch: one declaring martial law and the other declaring a state of emergency in Wasco, Jefferson, and Deschutes counties.

1993

January 26

Portland legislator Beverley Stein introduces a bill that would change the voter registration cutoff from twenty days before an election to five days in order to encourage higher voter participation.

April 26

The British Home Office approves the forced return to Oregon of Anand Su and Prem Savita. Their one remaining legal maneuver to try and prevent extradition is to ask an appellate court to set aside the decision of Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke, but this is regarded as probably futile.

July 12

Plans for leasing the former Rancho Rajneesh to the Science Ranch Inc. are put on hold. Dennis Washington seems not to want to commit to this plan.

29th | Anand Su and Prem Savita win a British High Court ruling forcing a review of Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke's April 26 order approving their extradition.

August 14

Anand Su and Prem Savita enlist members of the British press and some British politicians in their battle against extradition.

20th | Swami Devaraj, who has changed his name to Prem Amrito, sends a statement to Janet Reno asking her to investigate "a conspiracy by senior officials in the Reagan administration to destroy Rajneesh's commune." Amrito charges that Charles Turner misused his office to try to get rid of Rajneeshpuram.

25th | A South African magistrate defers a decision on whether Ann Phyllis McCarthy, aka Ma Yoga Vidya, should be extradited to the United States. The Bloemfontein Appeals Court wants to investigate the matter further before ruling.

December 10

Lawyers for Anand Su and Prem Savita claim lie-detector tests show their innocence. Clare Montgomery, attorney for the Home Office, says any polygraph evidence should have been made available to the government earlier that year.

15th | After a three-day hearing, the British High Court upholds the order to send Anand Su and Prem Savita back to the United States, but the ruling includes a provision allowing them to take their extradition fight on to the House of Lords.

1994

February 8

The Osho Commune International has become "the biggest spiritual health club in the world," according to a statement from Swami Prem Amrito,

Rajneesh's doctor, who makes a point of saying that no one makes any money from what he calls "Club Meditation."

March 22

Anand Su and Prem Savita lose their final court battle against extradition. A panel of senior judges says they cannot appeal to the House of Lords.

28th | Anand Su and Prem Savita make final court appearance in England. The only thing that could avert their extradition now would be for the home secretary to decide to reconsider their case.

April 7

Anand Su and Prem Savita get their extradition stalled. They receive a last-minute reprieve when a High Court judge agrees to another judicial review of their case.

14th | The Earl of Longford tries to speak in the House of Lords in defense of Anand Su and Prem Savita, but has to recede due to parliamentary rules.

May 28

Anand Su and Prem Savita receive a ten-day reprieve from extradition from the British government. The Home Office says that Anand Su and Prem Savita can have a hearing in the divisional courts on June 6, which will determine whether the two may make yet another appeal.

June 8

Anand Su and Prem Savita win still another reprieve from extradition, granted by the divisional courts.

July 27

Anand Su and Prem Savita are flown to Portland, Oregon, after finally losing their extradition battle.

29th | A day after Anand Su and Prem Savita arrive in handcuffs, a federal magistrate releases them on their own recognizance. U.S. Magistrate Donald C. Ashmanskas sets ten conditions to ensure they appear for trial. They sign forms saying they can be tried in absentia if they fail to show up.

December 20

A date—June 13, 1995—is set for the trial of Ma Anand Su and Prem Savita. The date will be nearly a year after their extradition.

1995

May 7

The Oregon attorney general heads a delegation of state officials that will visit the abandoned Rajneeshee commune to consider it as a possible site for a juvenile corrections center.

June 5

Dennis Washington offers to donate the former Rancho Rajneesh property to Oregon provided that he approves of their plans.

July 5-20

A jury listens to the testimony of thirty witnesses in the trial of Ma Anand Su and Prem Savita.

27th | Jurors deliberate for a second day over the Anand Su and Prem Savita case.

28th | Ma Anand Su and Prem Savita are pronounced guilty and are expected to face prison terms of up to five years.

August 29

Options for development of the former ranch property are discussed by state officials. Ideas include a contractor-operated cattle ranch, a juvenile corrections facility, an educational site, and a state park with campgrounds. State official Mike Marsh announces that "this park is not the kind of thing that changes the culture or the nature of the area." Still, area residents oppose the idea.

December 1

Anand Su and Prem Savita receive five-year sentences. They promise to challenge the convictions on appeal.

1996

June

Dennis Washington considers which group will get the ranch site: the nondenominational Christian group Young Life Ministries, which in the first week of June delivered a letter of intent to Washington, or the State of Oregon. Washington intends to donate the property to the group with the proposal that best benefits youth.

August 18

A range fire sweeps through the former Rancho Rajneesh, destroying the Bhagwan's former house, other Rajneesh buildings, and tens of thousands of acres of rangeland.

1997

August 4

Young Life Ministries wins the approval of the Wasco County Planning Commission and now heads to the county court. Young Life will need permission for zoning and land-use changes in order to restructure the camp.

6th | A medical investigator's report discussing the 1984 contamination of salad bars in The Dalles is published in the "Biological Agents and Warfare" issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association.* This is the first time it has been published, ten years after it was written. It had previously been withheld from publication in an attempt to prevent copycat attacks. The article explains that at the time of the attack in The Dalles, intentional poisoning was not considered a cause simply because no one seemed to have any motive. Now, says Michael R. Skeels, director of the Oregon Health Division's Public Health Laboratory, "our index of suspicion would be much higher than it has been. We would consider intentional contamination earlier in the game. We have lost our innocence about this possibility."

September 17

The Wasco County Court grants land-use approval for Young Life Ministries to develop a youth/family camp on the former Rajneesh property.

1998

April 28

Ma Anand Su and Prem Savita are released from prison early for being "model prisoners," in the words of Judge Malcolm F. Marsh, who handed down their conviction. He goes on to say that in his opinion they no longer

pose a threat to society. The two women are deported to England following their release.

1999

February

Ma Anand Sheela is tried on a conspiracy charge and sentenced to time already served in a Swiss court. This means that she no longer has to fear U.S. warrants when she travels outside of Switzerland.

2000

January 20

German police pick up Ma Anand Sheela in a town near Frankfurt, Germany after her appearance on a television show to mark the tenth anniversary of the death of Rajneesh. However, she is quickly released because the Interpol warrant for her arrest had been canceled following the Swiss court's ruling in February.

December 15

Ma Anand Su and Prem Savita have returned voluntarily to Portland to plead guilty to the remaining wiretapping charges against them, in order to cancel international warrants that confine them to Great Britain. Judge Malcolm Marsh gives them suspended probation, agreeing that they have lived meaningful lives since their release from federal prison.

2001

Following airplane attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, while America is gripped by fear of further terrorism, there are several incidents in which the deadly poison anthrax is sent through the mails to targets including U.S. officials and television and print journalists. The public is reminded by the media that the very first instance of biological warfare in the United States took place in Oregon in 1984 and was perpetrated by followers of Rajneesh.

2002

December 20

The former president of the Rajneeshee commune, Phyllis McCarthy, aka Ma Yoga Vidya, pleads guilty to the charge of conspiracy to murder U.S. Attorney Charles Turner. She says she takes personal responsibility for going along with the abortive 1985 plot to murder Turner.

22nd | McCarthy is sentenced to one year in jail and a $10,000 fine.

2005

September 26

Catherine Jane Stork, aka Ma Shanti Bhadra, now sixty years old, flies voluntarily to Portland to plead guilty to the charge of conspiracy to murder U.S. Attorney Charles Turner. She returns to clear the remaining charges against her because outstanding international warrants are preventing her from traveling to Australia to visit her dying son.

2006

January 30

Catherine Jane Stork is sentenced to time already served, meaning the three months she spent in a German jail during a 1991 extradition battle. Stork will be on five years probation in Germany. Judge Malcolm Marsh says he is convinced that Stork has seen the error of her ways. Moreover, he says in court: "I think there are times when justice trumps mercy. There are other times when mercy trumps justice. We have such a case here."

Present

Before his death in 1990, Rajneesh, who was by this point calling himself Osho, sets up an "Inner Circle" of loyal followers to carry on the work of the Bhagwan after his passing. The group would provide a balance of power and ensure that no one person would exploit his name. Before this Rajneesh had said, "I am not making anybody head of my religion because I don't want any books to be followed by me, exploiting people in my name. I am not going to be succeeded by anybody. When I am dead I am dead. There is no question of succession." When Rajneesh (Osho) died, the Inner Circle did in fact take over, but the balance of power did not work as Rajneesh had hoped. Soon after his death, disputes arose over how best to carry on Rajneesh's work at the Osho Meditation Center, with some of his followers believing the focus should remain the Bhagwan, and others believing they should now focus on his message without focusing on the man himself. The factionalism remains fierce today, with satellite groups popping up all over the world. The decentralization of the "Osho World" has weakened it; with no centralized leadership, the sannyasins pose little threat to the world at large.

THE CHRONICLES

Articles from *Oregon Magazine* 1981–1985

RANGE WAR: THE DISCIPLES COME TO ANTELOPE

Antelope townspeople cast a wary eye on red-clad newcomers

WENDLA McGOVERN

Antelope, Oregon, a town of forty people, barely noticeable in the sagebrush-scattered, semiarid country of central Oregon, doesn't usually have its town council meetings covered by CBS News. But since disciples of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh bought a 64,000 acre ranch nearby and set up a headquarters in Antelope itself, the town has found itself not only on television but also extensively covered in national magazines and major metropolitan newspapers.

Despite the intense media fascination with the new settlers, residents of Antelope feel that *their* story has been lost in the shuffle. They feel that both the size and the nature of the operations of the Bhagwan, an Indian philosopher who has blended Hinduism with the human potential movement, are likely to alter life in their corner of the state permanently.

The new owners of the ranch are in the process of building a medical center, an elementary school, a cafeteria, and a swimming pool. Mobile homes are being installed, and new arrivals appear almost daily. Rajneeshpuram ("City of Rajneesh") may become the world's largest spiritual farming co-op.

But for the dream to come true, enough housing permits would have to be obtained from Wasco and Jefferson counties (the ranch sits in both), and problems with the townspeople of Antelope would have to be resolved. The council meeting filmed by CBS, a showdown between Rajneesh representatives and local citizens, focused on whether the town council should grant the Chidvilas Rajneesh Meditation Center a business license for

a mail-order publication outlet. Against stiff opposition, the license was approved, but local leaders stressed that it was temporary.

Antelope citizens feel threatened by the red-clad devotees. Their long-somnolent town is suddenly encountering a group of international urbanites with gleamingly expensive and outlandishly new equipment: sophisticated farm machinery, spanking new mobile homes, Rolls Royces. And the newcomers are looking to buy more commercially zoned land, contacting the owners of the property near their headquarters.

The newcomers' attitude toward problems also differs from the usual approach in Wasco County. With substantial income from book sales, international meditation centers, and donations (including sizable gifts from Learjet and Baskin-Robbins heiresses), they feel confident that they can deal with any difficulties that might come up. "If I can't get more housing permits," says Sheela Silverman, the main spokeswoman for Rajneeshpuram, "I'll get the best lawyer in America to contest the decision."

Comments Margaret Hill, the mayor of Antelope, "They probably could overpower us. With $2,000 in our treasury, what could we do? How could we fight them with their millions?"

Given the intensity of feeling, townspeople were particularly interested in the arrival of the white-robed Rajneesh himself, now sometimes seen riding in his Rolls to and from Antelope. Needless to say, when the spiritual master was stopped for going sixty-eight miles an hour in a fifty-five mph zone, it was Topic A in Antelope.

— *Oregon Magazine,* November 1981

SAGEBRUSH GOTHIC: ANTELOPE'S LAST STAND

The town's desperate bid to disincorporate ends in failure

DAVID SARASOHN

It's important to be precise about it.

The feud didn't start, townspeople say, when followers of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh bought the 64,000 acre Big Muddy Ranch outside the little central Oregon town of Antelope in June 1981.

It didn't start when disciples of the Bhagwan began applying for building permits in town, or showed up at a city council meeting with a lawyer from Chicago.

The real trouble began when the Indian guru's followers started inquiring about vacancies on the Antelope school board.

The red-clad newcomers already had made it clear that they had no intention of sending their own children to the tiny one-room elementary school that represents the school board's sole responsibility. The Bhagwan's followers have a school on the ranch. Why, the townspeople wondered, did they want a hand in running Antelope's school? Because we're taxpayers and are interested in how our money is spent, was the response from the Bhagwan's disciples. But if the issue really was fiscal prudence, the locals countered, the sannyasins (the name the disciples use in referring to themselves) could vote down the budget when it appeared on the ballot. After all, the voting population of Rajneeshpuram, the new name of the ranch, already far outnumbered pre-Rajneesh registration in the Antelope school district. The sannyasins, the locals conceded, could even sit on the school district's budget board, which decides money matters. But why the school

board, which sets curriculum policy and hires teachers? The townspeople thought they knew the answer. And for the first time they truly felt threatened.

"As far as I'm concerned, this is nothing more than intimidation," says Don Smith of the city council. "Essentially, what they want is people to stop resisting them. This community has largely stood alone in resisting them."

The original residents of Antelope—the forty or so locals—talk frequently these days about intimidation and resistance, and about the city's most dramatic response, its effort to disincorporate itself to keep the Rajneesh from taking voting control. That effort, if nothing else, has focused attention on the town and its fears in a way that the locals had long felt unattainable. "The things we think are important," says one, "never get printed."

What the citizens of Antelope are resisting, at least in their minds, is a takeover of their community by a mysterious religious group that far outnumbers them and that has financial and legal resources of a magnitude that a year ago was unimaginable in north-central Oregon. The disciples, people think, have not only the resources but also the desire to drive them out. Anyone in Antelope will tell you that Sheela Silverman, the intermediary between the Bhagwan and his followers (and the outside world), has vowed to take over Antelope and raise taxes so high that only sannyasins can live there.

Twenty miles outside of town, in a double-wide mobile home on the former Big Muddy Ranch, Sheela Silverman denies that she ever said that and maintains that the town's problems are all of its own making. "I guess anybody would be upset. We are happy, and people who are not happy get upset with happy people," she explains. "The reason they're upset is a lot of jealousy there, a lot of Mayflower mentality—they got here first, so no one else can come in. And, people get into a habit of finding fault. At least it's publicity for them. Before this, who ever heard of Antelope, Oregon?"

The strength of Silverman's status is that she is the only disciple who actually speaks to the Bhagwan, who now lives on the ranch and claims a following of more than a quarter million throughout the world. How many of them will eventually be living on the ranch— especially if the sannyasins succeed in incorporating the city of Rajneeshpuram there—is a subject of considerable dispute: Sheela Silverman suggests 2,000, but the locals cite a *Los Angeles Times* story saying that the Bhagwan has dreamed of a city in the

desert of 50,000. Some indication of what the numbers might mean may come this summer, when the three hundred already living on the ranch plan to host a Festival of the Moon for 5,000 visiting disciples and others.

Former mayor of Antelope, Oregon, Margaret Hill.

No matter what they do, the townspeople are not very hopeful. The city council's effort to deny the disciples a permit for a printing plant with 111 workers in Antelope may also be a passing phase. Antelope seems likely to join the long list of American communities that have been utterly changed by the perfectly legal settlement of a different group. But the change here is so sudden and yet so complete, and the contrasts both in power and in values between the two groups so sharp, that the locals feel not only outnumbered but also strangers in what they had thought to be their land.

"I would not be at all surprised if next year at this time all of us are gone," muses Francis Dickson, also on the city council. "Unless you wear red clothes you won't be living in town."

Margaret Hill didn't particularly want to be mayor. But nobody was running for the job, and some people wrote her name in. The job is unpaid—all Antelope city jobs are unpaid, and when the city absolutely needs something, like a new water pump, the residents raise money with things like bake sales—but her husband had held the job several years earlier, and it only took two or three days a month. City council meetings were pretty informal, when enough people could be persuaded to show up.

"You know, to go way back to the beginning, when they first got here, they said they'd fallen in love with the ranch," Hill says, referring to the Rajneeshees. "And nobody cared. Many of the things they said they wanted to do sounded great. We didn't care what they did down there."

Soon, however, the disciples were appearing at city council meetings, seeking permits to build and operate commercial projects in Antelope. Some early permits were granted, but differences soon emerged over the major request, a permit for an 18,000-square-foot printing plant to produce some of the books and literature that bring in a large part of the Rajneeshees' considerable income, with a workforce almost three times the original population of Antelope. The council, citing the fact that the city's water supply was insufficient even for current needs (Antelope has to conserve strictly in summer), has been reluctant to grant the permit. The disciples, pointing out that the building would be located in an area already zoned commercial and maintaining that they would take care of the water problem themselves, have demanded it. With the ranch still limited solely to agricultural use, Antelope is the nearest urban area where the plant could legally be built.

The council and the disciples differ sharply over what has happened in the months since. The disciples say they have offered to work on a plan to solve both the town's and the plant's water problems; Hill says such an offer was never actually presented to the council. The council says the disciples withdrew the request when it appeared likely that they could put a city (and therefore a printing plant) on the ranch; Silverman denies that, and says the request has been active since they first made it last fall. In March, the disciples filed suit, through their Portland attorney, to force the council to grant the permit. Last month, the Wasco County District Court refused, but did direct an unhappy city council to grant four other requested permits for houses and offices.

What both sides do agree on is that council meetings are no longer casual. Antelope's city attorney, holder of a post that didn't really exist before last summer, now comes down from The Dalles for the monthly gatherings. The disciples videotape the proceedings, and the locals claim that when NBC appeared to shoot some film of one meeting, the network brought less equipment than the disciples did. The council now has a formal agenda set in advance and fixed office hours, to avoid what Hill describes as disciples "appearing at my door or on the phone at any and all hours." And large delegations from the ranch, sometimes running to several busloads, appear at meetings, a practice that the locals consider intimidation. Nobody maintains that anyone wearing red is ever physically threatening; rather, they respond to statements they disagree with by laughing in unison, a practice the locals find unsettling.

On the other side, Silverman is certain that the locals are violating their own procedures and Oregon law in their dealings with sannyasins. "I have records on secret meetings," she says firmly. "They've been holding council meetings secretly, deciding things beforehand. They've been abusing the postal laws, putting things into post office boxes without stamps, which is a *federal offense,* and I've reported them to the postal authorities." She has also twice reported the council to the State Ethics Commission (which has responded that it only has jurisdiction in cases of misuse of office for personal profit) and accused Postmaster Bill Dickson (husband of city council member Frances Dickson) of tampering with the Rajneeshees' mail.

Hill's reaction to these charges is to point out that, in a town the size of Antelope, a social gathering does not have to be very large or significant before it includes most or all of the city council, which does not mean that they are making secret decisions. In a town of forty, one Antelope resident explains, not many things are secret to start with. And then she cites, as many of the locals do fairly early in conversation, the Women's Extension episode.

Last December, according to the story, the local Home Extension group ("I don't know how you'd describe Home Extension," says Hill, sounding as though she has never before had to. "It's just a hen party, really.") met at Hill's house to make Christmas wreaths, causing a number of cars from town and the surrounding ranches to be parked outside her house. Swiftly, she received three phone calls from David Knapp, one of the disciples, charging

her with holding a secret meeting. “If you want to talk about harassment, that’s it,” says Hill. “They were obviously watching my house.”

Ever since the disciples became a presence in town—the group now owns seven properties—many of the locals have complained of feeling watched, of having their houses photographed. Since Antelope is only a few hundred yards long, and most of the houses are on one street, nearly any house can be watched from any other, and a single figure in a red down jacket, out for a twenty minute walk, can appear to be making a fairly thorough reconnaissance. Hill’s house, at the south end of town, is one of the closest to the Rajneesh properties and almost directly across from the former Antelope Cafe and Store, which, since its purchase by the Rajneesh (who renamed it Zorba the Buddha), is no longer quite the town social center it once was.

But at this point the locals seem to feel the presence of the disciples even when there are none visible, or when, as usually seems to be the case, there is only a lone red figure, at the far end of the street, slowly making its way between the Rajneesh offices and the cafe. The feeling of disturbance seems to run almost as strong on ranches secluded ten miles of axle-breaking county road away from town as at Hill’s house. Antelope is a preternaturally quiet and isolated place—one recent arrival says that for her first months there, she thought every car going through town was speeding because of the roaring it made in the silence—and the constant sense of a presence so close, so different, is almost tangible.

Combined with the constant legal and political maneuvering, and the ever-circulating reports quoting Silverman on taxes, the perpetual physical presence of the disciples puts many of the locals constantly on edge. “The anxiety builds up,” says one. “At least I feel it, because I don’t know what they’ll do next.” The anxiety extends to Antelope’s traditional social events, the Western dances and Friday-night volleyball at the school. “It doesn’t stifle things in actuality, it does mentally,” says one rancher’s wife. “We never know when they’re going to show up en masse.”

Because of this sense of uncertainty, and the feeling of opposing great resources, the presence of the disciples hangs over Antelope conversation and makes the discussion trade largely in rumor. (“What rumors do you want to hear?” asks Silverman when the subject comes up. “A lot of them I started

myself. It's a perfect way to keep useless minds occupied.") During the course of a day in Antelope you can hear that there is really no Bhagwan, or two; that the group intends to control, soon, all the land between Route 97 and the John Day River; and that its ostensibly vegetarian leaders frequently slip into Madras for a steak.

Many of the locals are careful to say that the disciples they sometimes encounter are never offensive or threatening, and that if so many problems hadn't surfaced, nobody would care if a few of them showed up to play volleyball. But it would probably be wrong to think that if the disciples hadn't wanted to build a printing plant in town, or if the city council hadn't objected, there would have been no friction between the two groups. The locals would probably still oppose the incorporation of Rajneeshpuram on the grounds that it represents the conversion of agricultural to urban land, a position shared by 1000 Friends of Oregon, which has led the legal fight. They would probably still resent what they consider the arrogance of the Rajneesh leadership, and the fact that in a dispute the religious community can hire Bob Davis, a top Salem lobbyist and former aide to Governor McCall, and Ed Sullivan, one of the state's sharpest land-use lawyers and a former aide to Governor Straub.

And at bottom, it is not likely that the residents of Antelope would ever have been totally comfortable with a group that takes ads in *Time* magazine headed "Sex," which promise, "Know your sexuality, and one day you will stumble upon your spirituality." Just about all of the locals have seen the movie *Ashram*, about the original commune in Pune (Poona), India, showing nude encounter sessions and some hitting therapy, and the photos in the German newsmagazine *Stern*, depicting both blissed-out nudity and the end of the community. The residents of Antelope use the word *morals* with no sense of ambiguity whatever, and they use it a great deal in talking about their apprehensions about the disciples.

Finally, there are the letters, letters that locals have been receiving from all over the world from relatives of people who have left their families for the Rajneesh and made large financial gifts to the Bhagwan upon entering the community. The locals read these letters, pass them around, and tend to identify with the pain and bewilderment of the writers. "I see these kids

walking the streets in these red outfits," says Don Smith slowly, "and I just can't understand what would make them join something like this."

It took the town's bid to disincorporate, to return its zoning and permit powers back to Wasco County, to get anyone to take notice of its concerns, says Hill.

"I was at the point where I just didn't talk to anyone for a long time, because it didn't do any good," she says in a tone that stops just short of resignation. "The Rajneesh are always pictured as this happy, loving group. Only very recently has anybody thought we weren't just a bunch of soreheads." Even now, with locals talking on the phone with the *New York Times* and appearing on live telephone hookups on radio stations across the country, with the Canadian Broadcasting Company and UPI in town and *60 Minutes* expressing interest, she is not sure of the effect. "It has almost become a media circus. I'm not sure that helps us; they're more glamorous, photogenic, and articulate than we are."

Even if the town is dissolved (there are many postelection legal stages to go through), she is not optimistic: "They are driving people out of the area. The people who left recently, who sold them their houses, didn't want to leave. Probably there will be a breaking point for everyone. It all comes down to how much of it you can take. I lie awake nights sometimes and wonder if I could have done anything differently. So far I haven't come up with anything. But it was maybe a little more difficult than they thought. At least it wasn't a pushover."

Sheela Silverman has to be in The Dalles for a hearing this afternoon. She also has to be in Portland to tape a television show tomorrow, there is someone to be met at the airport, there is a television crew waiting outside and a camera crew reported approaching on the road, someone wants to know if she's hungry, there is a phone call about every two minutes and she wants to talk to the construction crew before she leaves. Although that, maybe, can wait until tonight.

At the age of thirty-two, sitting on the thick carpet of the mobile home that serves as both her residence and office, Silverman is in effective control not only of Rajneeshpuram and its relations with the outside world but also of what is essentially a multimillion dollar international corporation. She is

also currently Oregon's hottest media personality, engaging and animated in conversation, alternately satirical, indignant, understanding.

She is having a wonderful time.

In Antelope, the locals say that if one of the Bhagwan's stated objectives was to eliminate "the egotistical man," the treatment doesn't seem to have taken with Silverman. They also, in their milder phrasings, consider her arrogant, insensitive, and prone to lash out when opposed. "When you cross Sheela," says one, "she just goes wild."

Against the constant background noise level of the office, Silver-man listens to this impatiently.

"We have not received a response on the printing-plant permit for seven months," she says. "We have given them eternal, unnecessary paperwork that they demanded. If I state this, they say I'm getting angry. If I laugh, they say I'm laughing at them. The only way out is to jump off a cliff, and I'm not going to do that.

"The Antelope people refuse bluntly to come here and see what we're doing, We have invited them numerous times. I've said bring the whole town, I can send the bus. They drove four hours to Portland to see the movie *Ashram,* but they won't come here."

(Don Smith concedes that the city council has declined invitations to come down to the ranch. "As it political body, it's none of the city of Antelope's business what's going on down there." He pauses. "As individuals, we probably should have gone down and looked around.")

"If I'm going to take over a town, why would I take over a small town like Antelope where you can't do anything? Let's take over Portland. Hey," she calls out to her staff, "we're going to take over Portland."

If such a response, or group laughter at city council meetings, might seem insufficiently sober to some, Silverman does not agree. "The Bhagwan says that seriousness is a disease," she explains. "Laugh your way to God."

Silverman has been with the Bhagwan since 1972, when she returned to India from college in America. Her family was wealthy ("We had enough," she says, drawing more laughter from a listening associate), and her father, whom she describes as "a spiritual junkie," had insisted that she meet the Bhagwan before leaving for America. While attending various colleges ("I tried to go to many places, but the longest I stuck around was at Montclair

State College in New Jersey"), she married an American, and the two of them began dreaming of how they might lure the Bhagwan to America.

The Bhagwan's teachings have been described as a combination of Eastern mysticism and components from the Western human potential movement, combining meditation with encounter groups and putting no great premium on asceticism; followers supposedly don't eat meat, but do drink and smoke. He stresses the de-emphasis of the individual ego, and the disciples feel themselves members of a worldwide community as well as of their local center. They wear various shades of red and orange and a photo of the Bhagwan on a string of beads around their necks. He maintains that he is not rejecting, but building upon, other religions, and there are locations on the ranch with names like Moses Way, Zen Road, and Magdalena.

The doctrine, and lifestyle, have proven highly attractive to many professional and prosperous Westerners, who thronged to Pune, the Bhagwan's headquarters in India, during the 1970s. Many of them, such as Learjet and Baskin-Robbins heiresses, made substantial financial gifts; others, such as disciples on the ranch, work for the community without pay. Currently, there are sannyasins throughout the United States, Europe, Canada, India, New Zealand, and Australia, where the group owns two other ranches. The Antelope ranch, they say, is not better than any of the rest, even though the Bhagwan himself is there now. "He could be gone tomorrow," says one disciple. "But we feel Bhagwan's presence wherever we are."

The Bhagwan lives in seclusion on the ranch, although disciples can catch a glimpse of him afternoons when he drives his Rolls Royce on his daily outing to Madras and back. He speaks only to Silverman, on the evenings when she is on the ranch, although sannyasins may write to him seeking help with their meditations or personal problems, and his counsel will come back through her. She does not, she says, discuss the management of the ranch with him.

The purchase of the Big Muddy Ranch was also Silverman's decision. The Bhagwan had already come to America, in a sudden shift from Pune (which closed down) to Rajneesh Castle in Montclair, where Silverman had gone to college. (The move supposedly supplied, among other things, improved medical treatment for his seriously deteriorated health.) Silverman and her second husband, John Shelfer, looked all over the country for a site for the Bhagwan's dream of a city in the desert. As soon as they saw the Big

Muddy, according to another disciple, they knew that it was the place. Six million dollars later, it was.

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh greets followers during one of his afternoon drives through Rajneeshpuram, October 1984.

"They call us foreigners," says Silverman, "but from what I understand, anyone not born in Oregon is a foreigner. We don't feel like foreigners. We feel more Oregonian, because at least we are doing something for the land. Oregon is my home, and will remain my home. I'm sure it was my home in some past life from the way I feel about it now.

"What's happening here is creative people are being obstructed for the sake of noncreative people," charges Silverman, citing the 1000 Friends suit and what she says is a threat to tie up the county in obstructive appeals. "This kind of organization should be shut down. They're destructive. It's because of organizations like this that Oregon is in economic paralysis." In the last

year, she says, the disciples have already put from fifteen to twenty million dollars into the Oregon economy.

The sannyasins, claims David Knapp, are caught in "kind of a Catch-22." Knapp, a Southern California psychologist who became a disciple four years ago in Pune, now largely handles the group's dealings with official bodies. The Antelope people, he complains, want to keep them out of town and are denying building permits, "which we need and deserve." At the same time, 1000 Friends of Oregon, with Antelope's support, is seeking to prevent the incorporation of Rajneeshpuram, which would allow for urban development and services on the ranch. "According to the 1000 Friends brief," Knapp says, "the solution is to go to Antelope, the nearest stated urban-growth area."

The only reason the disciples are in Antelope at all, claims Knapp, is the difficulty they've encountered with Rajneeshpuram. "We regard our presence in Antelope as definitely temporary," he says. "As soon as 1000 Friends drops its suit, we will withdraw."

The increased Rajneesh population in town, he says, is not due to disciples moving in before the disincorporation vote. "As long as we have a housing shortage on the ranch, we'll need places in Antelope," Knapp explains.

But the locals, although admitting that the disciples have ascribed their presence to temporary necessity before, are dubious. They are even more dubious about claims that the community's population in Antelope was not swelling as the election approached. The total grew, they charged, from twelve at the time the vote was called, to twenty-seven by late March. At that time, Knapp estimated a population "certainly no more than thirty-six," with fifteen or twenty registered to vote in Antelope.

Although the Rajneeshees attempted to block the disincorporation vote, Silverman maintains that she could not say how the disciples registered in town would vote. "Our people are not robots," she says firmly. "The man who runs the store in town is a very political animal. I wouldn't dare tell him how to vote. Voting is a private privilege. I don't know anything to say about that."

What does she think is going to happen in the Rajneesh dispute with Antelope?

“What’s going to happen is what they’ve brought upon themselves,” she says. “Let’s divert attention from this pettiness to something more essential, more vital. Let’s look inside ourselves.”

The way to get to central Oregon from the Willamette Valley is to drive east until you reach the West. Past the Cascades, where the rain stops and the people thin out, the West Coast ends and the West starts, and it runs from there to the Great Plains. When the rain reappears, you’ve reached the Midwest.

The lack of water has shaped the land and the agriculture and the politics of the West since settlement began. It has started range wars, sparked Supreme Court cases, and caused millions of people who moved there to pick up and move again. Most of the ones who stayed were probably secretly pleased with that part: it left them to enjoy not only the region’s most scarce commodity, water, but also its most abundant space.

Water and space, and feelings about people moving in to share them, are crucial issues in the dispute between the Antelope locals and the disciples. The town’s claim that it does not have enough water to permit a 111-worker printing plant is writ much larger in the locals’ concerns about the water needed to maintain large-scale experimental agriculture and a new city of 2,000. But just the prospect of that many people, even if their total water needs were supplied by a daily airdrop of Perrier, is enough to unsettle people whose ideas of space have been shaped by living among vast dry expanses. “When I had to go to Portland for the doctor,” recalls Lottie Barthwick, a great-grandmother who has spent her whole life in the area, “it was just like being in prison.”

To an urban eye, the Big Muddy Ranch seems an unlikely population-density danger area. It totals 64,000 square acres, plus 18,000 owned by the Bureau of Land Management and leased by the Rajneesh, for an area well over one hundred square miles, about one-fourth the size of Multnomah County. You drive for ten miles, already on the property, before seeing any significant signs of settlement. It does seem as though 2,000 people could be put into the area without courting urban sprawl.

But the local ranchers, who manage spreads of 10,000 acres with one family, find a proposal for 730 agricultural workers and a slightly greater supporting population incomprehensible and threatening. To this, the

disciples respond that they will be doing not open-range livestock ranching, but entirely different, more labor-intensive agriculture. Questions about why they need so many people, they say, are usually answered by a tour of the ranch.

The work done so far by the ranch's 280 inhabitants is impressive. Selected from sannyasins all over the world for particular skills, they work from 7:30 in the morning until 7:00 at night, with a half day off every two weeks; a notice on the cafeteria bulletin board invites disciples to give their half day to "beautify the ranch" by planting trees.

With the aid of a sizable investment in heavy equipment, they have put up a cafeteria, six greenhouses, and a dairy barn for fifty Holsteins, and have begun roadwork. They expect to plant 6,000 fruit trees this spring, using an Israeli drip-irrigation system. They say they have planted 1,000 acres of winter wheat (the locals are skeptical of the figure) and will put in another 2,000 acres of oats and barley this spring. They have improved the roads, and a rock crusher is slowly turning a cliff to gravel. And they have successfully dug wells and are beginning a dam to hold the spring runoff.

"We have ample water," says Silverman. "Not only that, we are creating projects to conserve water. We are more careful than anyone in the past has been. The people complaining are upstream from us. Their carelessness will affect us." To their requests for incorporation, and for permits from Wasco County for another four hundred mobile homes, the disciples have appended statements from several water experts.

The locals, however, are not convinced, and the fact that the disciples' wells are bringing up water does not reassure them. "There's not much water out there," complains one rancher. "There are some good springs, but we're afraid that their wells will dry up those springs." Like everything else the disciples do, their water policy is seen as a threat. "Water rights are water rights," says another, "but they've got pretty good lawyers."

Secretary of State Norma Paulus (right) watches as Antelope citizen Francis McKay counts ballots for an emergency election held to disincorporate the city of Antelope in 1982.

And there is also an undercurrent of resentment that newcomers should be telling veteran ranchers about the potentialities of the land in southern Wasco County. “They come in here,” complains one, “and say they’re going to show us how to farm it efficiently.” Others say that the disciples should first show that they can farm the land successfully before they set up the city the farming is supposed to support. Like the wells, the new technology is not comforting. “Maybe,” admits one local, “we resent them because they can buy new tractors and we can’t.”

Martin Zimmerman, of the Jefferson County Agricultural Extension Service (two-thirds of the ranch is in Jefferson County, although all of the proposed city is in Wasco), does not think that the disciples are likely to suck up all the water from under their neighbors’ property. But he is not optimistic about the Big Muddy Ranch’s prospects.

“With unlimited capital, drip irrigation, and a few pumps, you can do some pretty interesting things, but not usually on a large-scale basis,” he

says. “People have attempted dry-land farming before, and the soil is rather poor. Greenhouse attempts have not been profitable in this area. To have 1,500 irrigated acres of crops, you need about 5,000 acre-feet of water. I really question whether they’re going to have that.”

But, Zimmerman admits, his calculations may be beside the point. “From a practical, commercial agricultural standpoint, the things they’re doing aren’t very feasible. But from where they’re coming from, they don’t have to be practical. They’re looking at it from quite another perspective. The Egyptians, thousands of years ago, watered some pretty barren hillsides with a six mile bucket brigade. You can’t say it’s impossible.”

The opposition to the group’s most cherished project, the city of Rajneeshpuram, does not hinge upon questions of water or the likelihood of agricultural success. The three separate pieces of land, totaling a little more than three square miles, where the disciples propose to incorporate are composed entirely of soil Level VII, or worse, land on which growing anything is difficult. Silverman complains that on the one hand people say that they’ll never grow anything on the ranch, but when the disciples want to use part of it for a city, suddenly they claim it’s valuable agricultural land. The group also insists that, despite claims by opponents, the city will not exceed 2,000 disciples. “It would be fantastic if a lot of others wanted to move in,” says Knapp, “but we don’t expect that.”

The 1000 Friends of Oregon brief maintains, however, that incorporation violates the state’s land-use goals. “Once established, a city has a license to expand without any power on the part of the state to question,” warns Bob Stacey of 1000 Friends. “The Rajneesh could change their minds and decide that they wanted a large urban area with a large population there. Now is the time to question whether we want that.”

The residents of Antelope, unsurprisingly, doubt whether the new city would remain that size. “I think it’s entirely possible that the population may well exceed 2,000 in a short time,” darkly warns Keith Mobley, Antelope city attorney, who practices in The Dalles. “I think that they would like to have a very substantial city, larger than the population of Wasco County [21,750]. Unless some resistance is there, it’s going to be a relatively short time before they control Wasco County.”

To such charges, Silverman only laughs and spreads her arms wide. “Where I am going to put them?” she asks. “Can you find me space? It’s common sense.” She projects only a city of “2,000 people residing happily in 1995.”

Even at the projected levels, Rajneeshpuram would have an impact on the area. “There might be long term impacts that would keep the problems going for a long time,” says executive assistant to Governor Atiyeh Bob Oliver, who has met with both sides. “If the population continues to grow, it would be a political force in Wasco County. As the population increases, there will also be a need for more services from the county.”

The settlement, however, would also change more than the politics. To the intentionally isolated residents of Antelope, it would affect the entire nature of their lives, something they thought they had the power to choose.

“I consider it pretty valuable, the sense of space out here,” says Lloyd Forman, who works on his father’s ranch outside the town. “I don’t say all these people are going to ruin it, but it’s sure going to change things.”

Another Antelope resident, Frank MacNamee, says that he has no plans to leave. But when pressed, he hesitates. “You get to the point where you feel like you’re fighting the whole world. Sometimes you wonder if you’re doing right. But what those people believe in is really different from what we believe in, what we were brought up to. I just wish I knew what’s right.”

At about twenty minutes to three on the day of the vote to dissolve the town, out of a clear sky, hail suddenly started to fall on Antelope. Up to that point, inexplicable natural phenomena had been all the day had lacked.

For weeks before the election, the townspeople had warned that the disciples would simply move enough people into Antelope to control it. But when it became clear that exactly that had happened, they seemed, if not surprised, at least taken aback.

Knowing that the last two days’ registration had turned the odds against them, they gathered in glum groups outside the school where the votes were being cast and in the parking lot where the media cars created Antelope’s first parking problem, watching the stream of new voters, most of whom were wearing red. Still, a certain local cheerfulness persisted in the basement of the school, where Antelope’s women sought to raise money for legal expenses by selling handmade sandwiches and pie to people with expense accounts.

Before any votes were cast, the town was planning a challenge, arguing that the fifty five disciples who registered—and voted against dissolution—could not all be legal residents. Had the election somehow gone the other way, the disciples had planned to appeal; the election was less a referendum on dissolution of the town than on which group would go to court the next week.

In the back room of Zorba the Buddha, Silverman propped up her phlebitis-stricken left leg and talked to the people from *60 Minutes* about the progress of tree planting on the ranch and the events of the day. "It's a good circus," she said, "I enjoy it." Earlier, in a jammed press conference, she had repeated that if the group could get what it wanted on the ranch, it would be willing to sell its Antelope properties.

Talk of a compromise, which comes up intermittently, always seems to run head-on into a wall of obstacles. Both the commune and its opponents, 1000 Friends of Oregon, say they regard the incorporation of Rajneeshpuram as non-negotiable. The townspeople of Antelope say they wouldn't trust the disciples to keep an agreement. And on all sides, there is evidence of the certain solidifying of position that results from explaining oneself too often on television.

Still, Ed Sullivan, the disciples' lawyer, is guardedly optimistic: "There'll be some resolution. It may not be exactly what anybody wants. But somewhere, good sense and goodwill will prevail."

Mobley doesn't disagree. But as he counts up the conflicts at the city, county, state, and federal levels—the disciples have given notice that they may sue for violation of the Fourteenth Amendment and civil rights acts—he phrases his expectations differently.

"This," he said on election day, looking around at the townspeople, the disciples, the cameras, and the hostility, "could go on for a long time."

—*Oregon Magazine,* May 1982

ZORBA THE BAKER

A Rajneesh nightclub joins a bakery in downtown Portland

ANN CULVER BECKMAN

Not all the followers of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh are content to live off the land, it appears. Zorba the Buddha restaurants, springing up in cities like Portland and The Dalles, have the makings of a chain operation, with the Rajneesh disciples following their new ventures into urban territory. Now the latest plans are for a Zorba the Buddha Rajneesh Disco Nightclub, slated for 901 SW Salmon Street in Portland.

Rajneesh disco? Members of the religious group are more than modestly enthusiastic about this latest development, which offers disco and belly dancing, daytime jazz exercise classes, beer, wine, and a range of vegetarian lunches and dinners.

Zorba the Buddha, according to the Bhagwan's followers, is a name that combines the characteristics of Zorba the Greek with the ancient Buddha. Zorba the Greek, the disciples explain, loves life and all the material goods it offers. Buddha, they say, is silent, meditative, and spiritual. Both Zorba and Buddha are like birds with one wing, but together, claim the Rajneeshees, they represent material spiritualism.

Some of the materials of this spiritualism—Viennese walnut tortes, chocolate cocoa fudge, seven varieties of bread—are trucked in at two o'clock each morning from the central Oregon ranch to Portland for the Rajneesh bakery on SW Alder Street. Despite the high cost of transportation, the baked goods are priced competitively: 90¢ to $1.20 for bread, 50¢ for a brioche, 80¢ for a croissant. The Rajneeshees, of course, don't work for pay—though they typically put in twelve-hour days—and thus keep costs down.

“It’s very interesting to be going into the marketplace,” says Ma Prem Patipada, overseer of bakery and cafe operations. “We find that people are attracted, curious, and scared. We’re really no different from anyone else, but people think we are.” Twenty disciples turn out the breads, muffins, pies, cakes, and cookies. The resident cake decorator is an acupuncturist who proudly displays his acupuncture license while he adds flourishes to Rajneesh cakes.

“He’s particularly good with [confection] flowers,” says Patipada.

Among the notable goodies are macaroons dipped in bittersweet chocolate (three for 50¢), Danishes filled with a mixture of walnuts, orange peel, and coconut (95¢ to $1.25) and buttery rich Mexican wedding cakes rolled in powdered sugar (10¢ each).

The Rajneesh disco may be the logical way to work off the cake-and cookie-induced calories. And it’s not out of line with the Bhagwan’s philosophy: a major plank in his platform is the necessity for laughter and happiness. Music and dancing, disco and religion—it’s all one big, cheerful manifestation of the power of Rajneesh thinking emanating from central Oregon.

—*Oregon Magazine,* January 1983

Rajneehsees examine Bhagwan merchandise—books and bumper stickers—at the annual World Festival.

SLEEPING WITH THE BHAGWAN

Can a mail-order catalog make the guru a pop idol?

STEVE COHEN

RAJNEESHPURAM—The Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh may be having his problems with the Immigration and Naturalization folks, but that's not stopping his marketing minions from retracing the paths of Mickey Mouse, Annie, and E.T. and turning their guru into a certifiable pop idol. Last month, we noted the Rajneeshees' new bakery and disco nightclub in Portland. This month, we note their new mail-order operation.

Want to sleep with the guru? How about the Bhagwan pillowcase, in blue, pink, ivory, yellow, peach, or lilac, imprinted with a photo of the Rajneesh snoozing. Just $6.50.

Perhaps you have in mind a less celestial experience. How about a lucite bottle opener ($19) or acrylic key rings ($2.50), both with (guess who) photos of the Bhagwan. The key ring inscription: "This is the Master Key to Celebrate . . . Everything." Or take your pick of velour towels ($14), Zorba the Buddha mugs ($3.25), a beer stein (with photo of Herr Rajneesh, only $6.50), or a disposable lighter (a steal at $1.75).

Lastly, there's a gift for those sadly still stuck on the familiar time/ space axis we call daily life: a Rajneesh watch. No, it doesn't have the guru's hands outstretched and Rolls-Royces in the place of the numbers, just the meditative presence of you know who.

— *Oregon Magazine,* February 1983

PAINTING OREGON RED

Rajneesh lobbyists eye land-use trends in Salem

STEVE COHEN

When the Rajneeshees joked about painting Oregon red, nobody thought they'd start with the state capital. But there they are—out in force, five full-time Rajneesh International Community members making introductions, shaking hands, and working the legislature's hamburger-and-fries circuit. Included in the contingent are Ma Mary Katherine Pederson, well acquainted with the ways of politics after serving in Portland's Office of Neighborhoods in the 1970s, and Swami Krishna Deva, mayor of Rajneeshpuram. The group worked the capital full-time through last month and now plans to rotate its members.

Why are they there?

"We're on the lookout," says Deva. Feelings about the Salem-bound Rajneeshees vary widely. Says one veteran legislator plainly, "If they stay around here, they'd be defeating their own purposes. They stand out like a sore thumb." Certainly they are the most noticeable lobbyists, as Wayne Fawbush, the state representative from the Rajneesh Ranch area, confirms.

"They're the only ones with malas around their necks and dressed in shades of pink to burgundy."

The Rajneeshees did not endear themselves to L. B. Day, a Teamster rep in nonlegislative life and a veteran of Oregon's capital wars: "Five of them read tarot cards in my office. They've been in here acting like a bunch of sillies."

Both Fawbush and State Senator Ken Jernstedt represent the ranch's area and must be keenly aware of the Rajneeshees' 1,000 to 1,500-vote bloc.

Fawbush sees both sides of it. “They’re bright and impatient,” he says of the Rajneeshees. “They’re nervous about what the legislature might do to them. They want to keep their eyes on things.”

Along with familiarizing themselves with legislative process, the lobbyists are keeping tabs on changes in land-use and incorporation laws. The incorporation of Rajneeshpuram is awaiting a ruling in Oregon’s Court of Appeals, and some legislators are irked at the notion of carving a new city out of central Oregon rangeland.

The Rajneeshees had retained influential lobbyist Bob Davis, who represented Nike, Teledyne Wah Chang, and Allstate Insurance, for more than a year at several thousand dollars a month. But in mid-January that relationship was terminated and the personal presence of the Rajneesh community began.

—*Oregon Magazine,* March 1983

CULTIVATING CULTISTS

Does Rajneesh "deprogramming" mean reprogramming into Rajneeshism?

STEVE COHEN

There it was, plain as day, bannered on the front page of the *Rajneesh Times,* the official rag of the group: "Rajneesh community offers deprogramming courses for cult victims." What's this, a fellowship of the Bhagwan and Ted Patrick? Of course not.

While the headline would appear to be pretty clear, the story behind it is murkier. You might believe that the welcome mat was out for Moonies, Scientologists, and Hare Krishnas. But Swami Prem Siddha, a leader of the ranch's deprogramming efforts, says, "We're talking about a wide variety of people, people who have been incapacitated by conditioning, by social conditioning, by the school system or whatever, and which has meant preventing them from moving back to their true selves." Siddha says the "deprogramming is part of the larger Rajneesh meditation experience, obtainable by ranch visitors at up to $70 a day. While admitting that because of the experience, "people who have been in other cults have become Rajneeshees," Siddha is unable even to guess at the number of people who have attended or completed the deprogramming process.

Is the "deprogramming" a none-too-subtle front for recruitment of new members? Says Siddha, "We have no interest in recruitment. We have an open door."

In a previous life, Siddha was Leonard Zunin, a Los Angeles–based psychiatrist. Siddha says the ranch's deprogramming project involves some twenty or twenty-five Rajneeshees, most of whom have some training in psychiatry.

—*Oregon Magazine,* March 1983

RAISING A RED FLAG

Oregon's first Rajneesh disciple sounds an alarm

STEVE COHEN

Oregon's first Rajneesh disciple, Swami Prem Gautama (Robert Anderson), recently achieved the further distinction of becoming Oregon's first Rajneesh defector to go public with his story. Initially, Anderson says, he had trouble finding anyone to publish his claims because he had never lived at Rajneeshpuram. Finally, Portland radio station KMJK's Carolyn Myers broke the story, and the floodgates were opened.

For two minutes a day in the early-morning hours of Valentine's Day week, KMJK's "Better Dead than Bhagwan Red: Confessions of a Rajneesh Refugee" hit the airwaves. By the end of the week, the twenty-nine-year-old Anderson had accused the Bhagwan of being an untrustworthy "charlatan" who practiced mind control to gain money and power, of teaching watered-down Tantric sex that degenerated to "stupid and harmful indulgence," and of being responsible for Anderson almost losing his life. It also seemed the former disciple was comparing Rajneeshpuram to the suicidal Jonestown cult when he stated that if the Bhagwan "gave out the order for everyone to blow themselves away there would be a healthy percentage of people who would do so."

Anderson is now eager to set the record straight. He labels the radio interview "media sensationalism" and "gross, crass commercialism," adding, "the way Carolyn set up those remarks made it sound like I was inferring that there's going to be a bloodbath." Anderson states he was only referring to the potential of disciples to follow their guru when they had

abandoned critical thinking. “Jim Jones was a wild, charismatic madman who wasn’t really too smart. And Rajneesh is a very smart cookie.”

Anderson thinks that the Bhagwan is the guru of shortcuts. For instance:

By teaching Tantric sex (a powerful and advanced esoteric discipline that uses sexual energy and transforms it to spiritual energy) devoid of meditation and discipline, Rajneesh is appealing to the weakness and desires of the American public. By offering an advanced technique to beginners, mindless sexual indulgence is the result. “It’s like giving matches to children,” says Anderson.

Anderson also claims that the organization is amassing great wealth to provide a power base for the Bhagwan: “The more finances he has here, the harder it’s going to be to dislodge him. . . . He wants to build a little empire for himself, and he just wants to be king. It’s as simple as that.”

Anderson’s involvement with the guru began shortly after he graduated from the University of Oregon in 1977. He had a degree in music, an interest in meditation, a job in a bookstore, and a big void in his life. When one of Rajneesh’s books came across the bookstore counter, things began to fall into place for Anderson: “What he was saying sounded really good to me.” Anderson filled in a form, sent it and some photos to India, and received his new name in the mail. Swami Prem Gautama, Oregon’s first orange-clad Rajneeshee, hit the Eugene streets.

After spending a year meditating and studying the Bhagwan’s discourses, Anderson moved to California in 1978 to be with other disciples. Immediately, he was struck by their lack of spiritual knowledge and commitment and shocked by their free-sex attitude *(“Saturday Night Fever* crowd painted orange”).

Oregon’s premier disciple changed his clothes, put his beads in a drawer, and went on sabbatical. Unfortunately, 1979 was no vacation for Anderson, as he ended up in a Santa Cruz hospital after having been escorted there by police who had investigated strange noises emanating from his home—the consequence of “the conjunction of some [psilocybin] mushrooms with some of his [Bhagwan’s] chaotic meditation.” This incident and months of feeling “wretched” led Anderson to seek professional help. Traditional psychiatry proved a dead end, and the ex-Rajneeshee wound up with a Rajneesh psychiatrist who led him through a Tibetan rebirthing experience—and back to the Bhagwan.

Six months later, in June of 1981, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh arrived in Oregon. Anderson says that the quest for big bucks to finance the new commune was on, and he was continually pressured to give up his music and get into computers so he could make more money. This time, Anderson hung up his beads for good.

The former disciple contends that the Rajneeshees were afraid he might go public with his discontent and tried to bring him back into the fold. Harassing phone calls, phone taps, offers of jobs to keep his mind diverted, and "sannyasins in disguise" who followed him and gave him "dirty looks" were allegedly part of the campaign. Anderson even claims that two hundred women were sent, singly, to lure him back, but he wasn't buying. "Of course, it's possible that all this is a fabrication of my paranoia, but I do not think this is the case," he says.

Anderson has now founded Oregonians Against Rajneesh, "an organization of people who feel that the presence of Rajneeshpuram could be a threat to the quality of life."

— *Oregon Magazine,* April 1983

BHAGWAN BUCKS

Rajneesh money proves a boon to some Oregon businesses

STEVE COHEN

RAJNEESHPURAM—The Rajneeshees have a problem. Oregon businesses, they say, are happy to take their money, but when it comes to expressing a little verbal support for their crimson customers, the businesses clam up. An editorial in the *Rajneesh Times,* the commune's weekly newspaper, recently criticized Oregon companies that refuse to express "a little appreciation for our custom," because support might alienate their non Rajneeshee clientele. The editorial asserts that "a few bigoted people are busy trying to kill the only goose currently laying golden eggs in the whole of the Pacific Northwest."

The Rajneeshees claim they have pumped $35 million into the Oregon economy since July 1981, and they expect to spend an additional $11 to $12 million in the first half of 1983. They state that their monthly food bill is about $80,000, and they spend more than $100,000 a month for gas and diesel. Ma Prem Savita, a Rajneesh financial adviser, says, "It's time Oregon woke up to the fact that the Rajneeshees are the best thing that ever happened to its economy."

Although the *Times* singles out the fuel supplying Jefferson County Co-op—because the co-op wouldn't publicly comment on the pleasures of dealing with the Rajneeshees—it did publish glowing endorsements from nineteen businessmen, many of whom were grateful to the commune for keeping their businesses afloat. Rajneesh support allows Eugene's Williams Bakery to keep its Madras run and Salem's American Steel to maintain a profit, say the ads.

Pape Brothers, a Eugene heavy-equipment company, credits the Rajneeshees for creating "over 25 percent of the employment in our Redmond store" and generating more than $600,000 in sales. Bohemia Lumber's ad features a necklace with the Bhagwan's picture around a stump branded with the letter *B* and copy that exhorts, "Shine on, Rajneesh." Hermiston Ready Mix Concrete has both placed full-page ads and donated a flagpole and American flag to the ranch.

Other firms offering endorsements are Bend's *Bulletin* newspaper, Blake Moffitt & Towne, VWR Scientific, Familian Northwest, and the Portland law firm of O'Donnell, Sullivan, and Ramis.

In private, almost every business *Oregon Magazine* contacted lauds Rajneesh business ethics, sincerity, and sense of humor. Many say that the Rajneeshees are their favorite customers. Most also admit they'd rather keep their business relationship with the Rajneeshees private. Says one businessman who doesn't want to be named, "Quite honestly, I have another five hundred clients and I know some people don't like 'em."

So why do businesspeople who would prefer to keep private go public? Pressure, perhaps, but the same kind of informal pressure that occurs in many business deals between suppliers and buyers. What may be most noteworthy about the public endorsements, and their publication, is the clear inference that the Rajneeshees crave public acceptance and legitimacy. In their newspaper, they make note of their inability to gain a good working relationship with Oregon banks. Living in a society of their own making, the Rajneeshees want the best of both worlds.

The Rajneesh golden goose is no longer laying eggs for one Oregon company. The *Times* recently carried a full-page ad from Rolls-Royce of Beverly Hills ("And thanks to the unique suspension, he [the Rolls owner] drives in a tranquility that has been compared to the endless peace discovered by the Buddhas") that confirms it has sold "upward of fourteen" cars to the ranch. Portland's Monte Shelton Motor Co. has sold thirteen Rolls-Royces to the commune but doesn't know why the Rajneeshees have taken their business to California. "We didn't show respect or some damn thing. . . . It's too bad because we turned handsprings . . . and ate a lot of sh*t to sell them cars," says Neil Shelton. His dad, Monte, is a bit more diplomatic.

Wishing them “no ill will,” he notes that the Rajneeshees are a “pretty good group,” who are “shrewd dealers and difficult to work with.”

—*Oregon Magazine,* May 1983

Ma Anand Sheela goes over plans for a new subdivision.

BURNIN' DESIRE

Rajneeshees lay plans for a giant crematorium

STEVE COHEN

Oregon's newest city plans to build the state's first open-air crematorium. Rajneesh ritual calls for community members to observe the burning of departed disciples' bodies, and the commune's funeral pyre is to be a sixty-foot-long metal, stone, and wood hexagonal canopy that resembles an Oregon highway rest-stop exhibit area. This final resting stop has only one metal grate, however, and an eight-foot space-needle chimney with a propane afterburner.

Apparently anyone possessing a signed death certificate and permission of the next of kin may cremate a corpse, as long as the burning device meets Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) air-pollution standards for crematoriums. The Rajneesh design passed the smoke-density requirement but needed and received a variance on the total amount of particulates, because the open-air version was not thought to be as efficient as the commonly used closed variety. Just how many particulates does a burning body emit? "One would hesitate to guess," says DEQ's Janet Gillespie.

The commune doesn't plan to fire up its $50,000-plus crematorium project until the end of summer. Design details have bounced back and forth between Rajneeshpuram and the DEQ's Bend office, and commune construction crews have their hands full preparing for July's Second Annual World Celebration, which may bring 15,000 guests to the ranch. Rajneeshees are in no hurry to begin the project, as the average member's age is thirty-three. Most residents, we are told, are in "better than average health" and have a "positive attitude toward life," which has so far meant no deaths at Rajneeshpuram.

After the crematorium is built, the DEQ wants a test fire—with wood only. “I don’t particularly want to be there when they burn a body,” says a Bend DEQ employee. “They can call us if they have any problems.”

—*Oregon Magazine,* June/July 1983

BHAGWAN'S JEWISH PROBLEM

The real aim of Rajneesh's anti-Semitism may be mind control

WIN McCORMACK

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, whose spokespeople claim that approximately one-third of his American following is Jewish, nonetheless seems to have a problem with at least some official segments of the American Jewish community.

Apparently, back when he was still speaking to his followers—in fact, speaking every morning, giving rambling, hours-long discourses— Rajneesh delivered himself of some inflammatory opinions on the subject of Jews.

In a 1975 book called *The Mustard Seed,* a record of selected discourses given by him at his ashram in Pune (Poona), India, Rajneesh appears to justify the slaughter of millions of Jews in the Holocaust of Nazi Europe on the grounds of Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus Christ, and he implies that Jews have sought out such persecution because of their guilt over Jesus' death.

"Jews," he writes, "are always in search of their Adolf Hitlers, somebody who can kill them—then they feel at ease. When nobody bothers about them, then they are uneasy, the guilt follows. When you throw stones at Truth this is bound to happen, and even after twenty centuries of suffering, the Jews have not confessed that they did wrong." He also implies that Jesus' death was worth the deaths of many millions of Jews.

In India, Rajneesh was also given to frequent attempts at humor. One of his "jokes," recorded by writer Sally Belfrage, a former resident at Pune, in her 1981 book, *Flowers of Emptiness,* goes like this: "A couple of tigers are

walking through the woods, when the second tiger pokes his nose in the first one's ass. The first tiger says: 'What's the matter with you, you got the hots for me or something?' The second tiger replies: 'No, but I just ate a Jew and I need to get the taste out of my mouth.'"

Sheela Silverman, president of the Rajneesh Foundation and the Bhagwan's chief spokesperson, recently weighed in with her contribution to this strain of Rajneesh humor, telling the following joke to a TV reporter: "How do you fit several hundred Jews into a Volkswagen? Put two Germans in front and the Jews in the ashtray."

In a June 24, 1983, affidavit before the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA), Paul Gerhardt Jr., a land-use planner with 1000 Friends of Oregon, testified that when he and Mark Greenfield, a staff attorney for the environmental group, visited Rajneeshpuram on June 22 to inspect city records, Greenfield was vilified with anti-Semitic insults from red-clad Rajneesh followers. "Greenfield? What kind of name is that? Are you Jewish? . . . Jews are cheap. . . . We burned Jews in Germany" were among the remarks made to Greenfield, according to Gerhardt's sworn testimony.

Jews are, understandably, sensitive to statements and jokes like these. While the Portland Jewish community has yet to take a formal stand on Rajneesh and his activities in Oregon, the Board of Rabbis and the Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles are among the petitioners to the Immigration and Naturalization Service office in Portland requesting that Rajneesh be denied a permanent resident visa to remain in the United States. The petition accuses him of being anti-Semitic and calls him a "destructive force in American society."

Rabbi Stephen Robbins, chairman of the Task Force on Cults and Missionary Efforts of the Jewish Federation Council of Los Angeles, thinks that he understands the reasons for the Bhagwan's alleged anti-Semitism. Alluding to the fact that Rajneesh does have a significant number of Jewish followers, he theorizes that the anti-Semitic statements and jokes of the Bhagwan and Silverman are part of an effort to break down the identities of Jewish followers. "Once you tear down people's identities," he says, "they are open to being manipulated and controlled—which is what cults aim to do. If you turn someone's identity against himself—if you get Jews to make fun of themselves— then the person's identity is destroyed and you can step in and give that person a new identity."

Rajneesh spokespeople vigorously deny the charge of anti-Semitism. Silverman, whose first husband, now deceased, was Jewish, asks, "How can I possibly be anti-Semitic, when I married a Jew?" Rajneeshees claim that their "jokes" are merely a form of therapy designed to help Jews get over their morbid obsession with the Holocaust.

Rajneeshees also point to a number of other statements in which the Bhagwan has spoken admiringly of Jews, particularly of Jewish humor. Cult experts, however, say that the issuing of contradictory statements is one of the techniques cults use to keep their members mentally off-balance and confused.

The Jewish Federation Council of Los Angeles, in any case, is not buying the Rajneesh defense. Says Beth Hersh of the Community Relations Division: "We want him out of the country."

— *Oregon Magazine,* August 1983

LAST YEAR AT RAJNEESHPURAM?

The cult city's demise is inevitable

WIN McCORMACK

In the film *Last Year at Marienbad* by French writer Alain Robbe-Grillet, the characters enter and exit a stage play taking place in the auditorium of a baroque, nightmarish hotel in which they seem to be trapped, alternately playing the exact same roles onstage and in their ostensible real lives. Are they characters in a play or characters in a real-life story? They are, in fact, only characters in a movie.

Robbe-Grillet's camera crew was not present at the Antelope city council meeting that I attended earlier this summer, but it should have been, for it was difficult, observing the behavior of Mayor Ma Prem Karuna and other sannyasin council members, to distinguish reality from histrionics—particularly when Karuna announced that, after serious reflection, she had decided that a proposed ordinance to set aside land within the city for public nudity was a "positive" idea.

Eckart Floether, a Rajneesh defector, says that he remembers Karuna because it was she, he claims, who tried to dissuade him from leaving the Bhagwan's ashram in Pune (Poona), India, a few years ago. Floether had been at the ashram for several months when, according to him, certain events transpired that made him question his sojourn there, events that he has written about in his pamphlet "Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and His New Religious Movement in America," published by the Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship of the United States. First, Floether says, during a Rajneesh encounter group called Samarpan ("surrender"), he saw the group leader, Swami Anand Rajen, have sexual intercourse with a woman who was in the midst of an emotional catharsis over the recent deaths of her parents. Then, he says, the

next day, in the same group, he saw two men have sexual intercourse with another woman; as he put it in his pamphlet: "She did not, in my opinion, participate voluntarily." Next, he says, a woman friend of his at the ashram who was pregnant informed him that, at the Bhagwan's suggestion, she was going to have an abortion performed by a sannyasin doctor. Finally, according to his account, another woman friend of his at the ashram, twenty-eight years old at the time, told him that—again at the Bhagwan's suggestion—she was going to have herself sterilized.

Floether says that by this point he had seen and heard enough. Unlike the characters in the strange, disconcerting hotel at Marienbad, he succeeded in escaping Pune, but not, according to him, before Karuna, then "chancellor" of "Rajneesh International University," had used every argument in her repertoire to convince him to stay, telling him, among other things, that he didn't understand the "context" of the events he had witnessed. (Karuna says she doesn't remember talking to Floether and denies that any sexual intercourse ever took place in encounter groups at Pune.)

Rajneesh leaders and followers do not deny that they are in a cult; they merely assert either that, by the dictionary definition, all religions are cults or that, unlike other cults, theirs is a good one. Contemporary authorities, however, have defined cults in a very specific way: they are organizations that exist solely for the purpose of exploiting their members for the benefit of the leadership, a leadership almost always incarnated in a single, charismatic male. Unlike, say, orthodox religious sects, cults serve no genuinely useful, long-term social purpose, and for that reason they represent cul-de-sacs of history doomed to ultimate extinction. If the Rajneesh organization is a cult by that definition, then the people of Antelope can at least be comforted by the prospect of Rajneeshpuram's inevitable demise.

Someday, in my opinion, and maybe soon, the Rajneesh cult will break asunder. Since all cults have the inherent potential to end in violence, it may end that way; or, as is perhaps more likely in this case, it may end peacefully, with the Bhagwan and his top assistants departing for a South Seas island or the Riviera. The Big Muddy Ranch will lie deserted, and the wind will whistle through its empty buildings and corroding machinery; and then, possibly, some erstwhile sannyasin may happen upon the film *Last Year at Marienbad* and consider the import, for himself or herself, of its final scene.

At the end of the movie, night falls upon the darkened, ghostly hotel; the music rises, and a disembodied voice, addressing an unidentified person, speaks these lines: “It seemed, at first glance, impossible to get lost here . . . at first glance . . . down straight paths, between the marble statues with their frozen gestures and the granite slabs, where you were now already getting lost, forever.”

— *Oregon Magazine,* August 1983

BHAGWAN'S FLIGHT FROM INDIA

Rajneesh fled India under a cloud of legal problems

WIN McCORMACK

Although Bhagwan Shree ("Sir God") Rajneesh has had a controversial presence in Oregon for over two years now, many Oregonians are still seeking the answers to an intriguing question: Why did Rajneesh—who once said that he would never go to America because it had become the "home of charlatans and false gurus"—suddenly change his mind in 1981?

The possible answers to this question are relevant not only to several issues surrounding the activities of Rajneesh and his followers in Oregon, but also to the ongoing investigation of the guru by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

In a January 1982 cable to the INS office in Portland, the American Consulate in Bombay suggested two possible reasons for the Bhagwan leaving India. The first reason was the tax situation of the Rajneesh Foundation, the legal umbrella for Rajneesh's ashram in Pune (Poona), India. The consulate reported to the Portland INS office that tax authorities in India were initially stymied by followers of Rajneesh who had worked their way into positions of power in the Indian tax system. But the government finally revoked the foundation's tax-exempt status as a charitable organization and assessed the foundation taxes dating back to the ashram's founding in 1974. The rationale behind the revocation of the Rajneesh Foundation's charitable status, according to the consulate, was that, in the opinion of Indian tax authorities, the foundation had been raking in "vast sums of money" without performing any discernible charitable services for the Indian public.

The second probable reason for Rajneesh's sudden departure from India, according to the consulate, was the inability of the Rajneesh Foundation to obtain a large enough piece of property in India for the Bhagwan's projected utopian city of up to 100,000 people—after the foundation might have taken money from disciples in exchange for promised homes in this future city or ashram. According to the *Los Angeles Times,* the foundation's inability to secure the land was, ironically, a function of India's stringent land-use laws. Ironically, because it is the issue of land use that 1000 Friends of Oregon and others are using to challenge the incorporation of the city of Rajneeshpuram here in Oregon.

The *Los Angeles Times,* in an August 30, 1981, investigative story, also pinpointed a third possible reason for Rajneesh's unexpected decision to vacate his Pune ashram: things seemed, literally, to be getting too hot for him there. The relationship between his ashram and the townspeople of Pune—much like the current relationship between Rajneeshpuram and the townspeople of Antelope—had been one of hostility all along. Just prior to Rajneesh's departure, the friction between the two sides apparently erupted in two acts of arson against the ashram, one a firebombing of the ashram's health center that eerily parallels the July explosion at the Hotel Rajneesh in Portland.

The *Times* implied that the arson attacks against the ashram might have been connected to a dispute between the ashram and one of its landlords. The ashram had filed charges against this landlord, accusing him of sexually assaulting a female disciple. The landlord claimed he had been framed because he refused to cede disputed water rights on his property to the ashram. Ironic again, because water rights are a key issue in the land-use debate in Oregon regarding Rajneeshpuram.

The American consulate in Bombay also investigated this story and concluded that "sexual entrapment" was one of the ashram's "favorite techniques" for getting its way in India. The consulate's January 1982 report to the Portland INS office described this technique in some detail. "An individual, usually a man," the report alleged, "would be lured into a situation where he found himself alone with an ashram female. After a short time, the female claimed she had been molested. Amazingly enough, there were often cameras and tape recorders present. Then, an ashram official

would appear and offer to trade silence on a sexual charge for something the ashram wanted."

The ashram's alleged sexual entrapment of its landlord—who was also a popular newspaper editor in the city—was not the first such alleged incident in Pune, and some speculated that certain townspeople may have finally been sufficiently angered to resort to arson. Police and insurance investigators in Pune, however, suspected that the Rajneeshees may have set the fires themselves.

Rajneesh abruptly departed on June 1, 1981. Reportedly, seventeen of his closest followers left with him, but the bulk of his remaining disciples in Pune, who had not been forewarned of his impending flight, were stunned and bewildered. Practically as soon as his plane was in the air, according to the Bombay consulate, dismantlement of the ashram commenced, a coincidence that, if true, will lend credence to the INS contention that "Sir God," fully intending to remain in the "home of charlatans and false gurus" from the outset, obtained his original tourist visa in Bombay under false pretenses.

— *Oregon Magazine,* September 1983

DEATH OF A DREAM: MEMOIRS OF AN EX-SANNYASIN

Life at Rancho Rajneesh was not what she expected

SUSAN HARFOUCHE (FORMERLY, MA BODHIPRIYA)

When I received the long-awaited letter from Rajneeshpuram inviting me to come for the summer, to help to build the new city, I was initially stunned, although I had written first, saying that I wanted to go there and be with Bhagwan.

I had been his "disciple" for almost two years, having taken "Sannyas" by mail, feeling that I loved him totally, although I hadn't gone to Pune (Poona), India, to be in his physical presence as had most of his other followers. Only a few months after I took sannyas, while I was still planning to go to India to see him and trying to get the money together, suddenly Bhagwan and the whole ashram in Pune relocated to the United States, seemingly overnight—although now I see that it must have been well planned for quite some time. Needless to say, I was overjoyed!

His whereabouts, and what was to happen next, were cloaked in mystery for several months. We were told that a lot of land was being purchased for the new ashram-commune, and that there would be a place for each and every one of us to be there living permanently within one to two years. Everyone was instructed to get together as much money as they possibly could—whether it was money they had in the bank already, or from selling real or personal property, or even to beg or borrow from relatives or friends. We all proceeded to do this immediately . . . because the sooner the deal was closed on the land, the sooner the building could start, and the sooner we could all live there and be near Bhagwan!

When it was finally revealed that the property being purchased was in Oregon, it was also made very clear that no one was going to be able to just go there without proper invitation. For the time being, only those with certain skills, such as construction work, farming, etc., could go because of limited space in a few trailers. This seemed to make sense. There was a lot of land, but not much on it! Just one old farmhouse, about four other ramshackle buildings, nothing growing, and winter and snow on their way very soon.

At this time, being thirty-six years old, somewhat overweight, and with no experience camping out or "roughing it," I was content not going to Oregon for a while. I felt secure in being with Bhagwan very soon; I loved him above all else and gazed at his many photos, which looked back at me from many different locations around my small apartment, morning and evening. I was employed as an electronics assembler, and I kept myself occupied outside of work mostly with reading Bhagwan's books, listening to tapes of Indian music, and practicing different meditation techniques.

So, spring came and I heard of more people being able to go to the land in Oregon. I wrote Bhagwan a love letter. He wrote me one back. I shall never forget how tender and precious our love affair was in those days. In the neighborhood where I lived, especially at night, there was the odor of jasmine flowers. Whenever I caught the scent, I'd mentally say to him, "To you, my love." His love kept me totally fulfilled. Since my only goal was to go to Oregon and see him at last, who cared where I lived now, or how, since it was only temporary.

I got up my courage to write to Sheela, Bhagwan's personal secretary and president of the Rajneesh Foundation, and ask if I could come to the "ranch." (By now they were calling it a ranch instead of an ashram.) I also left the request kind of open, saying that I would come anytime it was possible . . . if not now, then anytime they allowed me to come. I didn't want to be too specific or seem demanding, because I didn't feel emotionally capable of facing a flat "no."

After some weeks, I received a form letter, which said I was invited for the summer, if I was ready for lots of hard work! As I said before, initially I was stunned! This was it—the moment of truth! I guess that what was really happening inside of me was that I envisioned myself going someplace like a traditional Zen monastery or something. I should've known better! The handwriting was on the wall in red, but I was wearing rose-colored glasses!

Included with the letter was a list of things I should bring, such as a tent, a sleeping bag, warm clothes, shorts, sun hat, boots, etc. I also had to get six months of health/accident insurance. I gave notice on my job, put my room up for rent, secured my plane ticket, and in general made all the preparations to leave for Portland, Oregon, on May 9, 1982. The nearly $2,000 I had in my checking account went down, down, down. The day I got on the plane, I had a balance of about $400. 1 had burned all my bridges behind me. It was sink or swim! Two days before I left I came down with a severe case of bronchitis, but I went anyway—coughing, sweating, and ears ringing from fever! Oh, what one can do in the name of love!

I imagined being warmly welcomed by the most intimate disciples of my Beloved Master. Beautiful dreams I had, while fully awake! I arrived in the town nearest the ranch, Madras, after five hours on the bus from Portland. Another "Ma" was on the same bus. There was a potbellied Swami, who looked like a prospector who'd been out panning for gold, waiting there to pick *her* (and her two kids) up with a car like a Volkswagen, and he wasn't happy at all to see *me* with all my luggage! In fact, he didn't even believe that I had really been invited—he thought I was lying and had to call the ranch to check my story before he would even let me in his car! (Here I am, in full orange with mala, and suspect. Of what?) I was later to learn of the tight security at the ranch; it was nothing against me personally.

We drove from Madras to Antelope, then on to the land. It was breathtaking! Miles and miles and miles of virgin land, farther than the eye could see! The hills and the wind chanted a sacred, secret message to me (it was my fever!). I felt on holy ground. I felt chosen, special. I felt Bhagwan's presence spreading over every inch of this vast desert, permeating even the smallest twig by the roadside—his love and protection encompassing every bird and insect and even every blade of grass and every rock, as well as his own disciples. I could sense that even if an ant was in trouble, Bhagwan would know, and care, just like God. (In India, Bhagwan *does* mean God.) And of course, he knew that I was now on his property and he was glad to know I was here.

(Little did I know, then, that he *didn't* know, *didn't* care, and *wouldn't have cared* if he had known!)

After about forty five minutes driving (from the beginning of the property line), we arrived at the ranch. I really don't remember what my first impressions were of how it looked. I was too sick to care. I was aching all over—tired, hungry, wet, coughing, and certainly not welcomed lovingly as I had anticipated. I simply hoped to eat dinner soon and go to sleep early. It was still raining, and all the dirt roads and vicinity were quite muddy. (The old nickname of this place is the Big Muddy!) I just wanted to go somewhere warm and perhaps sit down on a comfortable couch and relax and have a cup of tea.

But I soon found out there was much to do: we had to be "processed." First thing was to go to a place called "Pythagoras." Each place had a special name like that. I thought it was kind of cute. Pythagoras turned out to be the name of the medical clinic. Later on I came to realize that a lot of locations had these names as a sort of camouflage. We were not supposed to say "clinic"; we were only to refer to it as Pythagoras because it must not become known to any outsiders that the clinic existed.

The other "Ma" and I filled out some standard looking questionnaires. Then a female sannyasin doctor took us both into a small examining room where we sat down to receive what I imagine is the standard spiel for new arrivals. The first ten to fifteen minutes of the spiel was about sexual hygiene, mainly stressing not to have sex with anyone on the ranch until we had our tests and were "cleared," which would take at least a week. When it was okay, our names would appear on a special list that would be posted on the bulletin board at Magdalena dining hall. (Oh my God!). And it was strongly advised that we not have any sexual relations with anyone not a resident of the ranch, whether a sannyasin or not. One other issue that was stressed was the number of people living there. We mustn't be discussing the true number. Later on I learned it was about 1,000. "Officially" it was 250!

Approximately the next ten minutes of the spiel was about devotion to Bhagwan and his work. Especially stressed was "no gossiping." Especially, especially stressed was to watch your conversation around outsiders, to be careful with what you said over the telephone (it might be tapped), and even to watch what you wrote in outgoing mail. I wondered, *Am I at an ashram or am I in a coma hallucinating a scene from a James Bond movie?* It was truly cloak and dagger! We then had our VD tests. The doctor never noticed how sick I was.

The next stop was Magdalena dining hall, which wasn't too far from our temporary tent, so we decided to walk. It was there that I got my greatest shock thus far!

Dinner was served at 8:00 PM. We arrived at about that time. The place was packed beyond capacity, so that the line was out the front door and people were standing in the rain, waiting to get in for dinner. Once inside, all I can say is that it was a mess! People were wall to-wall, pushing and shoving like hungry animals, and talking loudly. In the entrance foyer were hundreds of coat hooks, and the jackets and sweaters that hung there were being knocked down by this mob and trampled with muddy boots! I had never seen anything like it anywhere in my life! It certainly didn't resemble my idea of an ashram dining hall. The only comparison that comes close is a movie I once saw about prison life. Only this was much worse! People were dirty from the day's work on the muddy farm, and the stink of sweaty bodies mingled with the smell of the food.

The system was to pick up a tray and get your dinner cafeteria-style. When I had picked up my food and inched my way into the eating area, all the tables were filled and there was no place to sit. Others were already sitting down on the floor to eat, so I did the same. For a moment, sitting on the floor like that in the midst of this noisy crowd, I felt like a great yogi in a marketplace somewhere in India. I didn't realize it at the time, but all of this self-inflicted misery of being a sannyasin was exactly what my ego was thriving on. (Bhagwan's teaching is to "drop" the ego.)

It was Sunday night, the night for the weekly meeting with Sheela Silverman (Ma Anand Sheela). I had seen a couple of photos of her, but I had never seen her in person, so I didn't recognize her at first. When the room suddenly became silent, I sensed she must be there someplace. (Of course *she* doesn't eat with us!) My attention was drawn to the front area of the dining hall, to a small, cleared area resembling something like a stage, though not that high. There was a special-looking chair with Sheela sitting in it.

Sheela is a small, attractive Indian woman, with a nice, sweet smile. Her hair was done, and you could tell she wore only the best! (She also drives a Rolls-Royce!) That night I wasn't looking at her objectively, so I enjoyed the meeting and the experience of seeing her for the first time. I thought she was witty and cute. If Bhagwan chose her as his No. 1, she *must be* very, extra special indeed! She didn't seem particularly spiritual, but what exactly is that

anyway? I rationalized that the more outer display of spirituality probably meant the less one actually had within, which is what counts the most. Being at Rajneeshpuram, I thought even *I* had arrived. (Arrived where? I had a lot to learn, though I didn't know it!).

After the general meeting had finished, I wanted to find the tent and go to sleep. It had been mentioned where we were to go to take a shower, etc., but I couldn't remember that information. I couldn't find the tent either, in the dark without a flashlight. I had to go back to Magdalena and find my tentmate. By that time there was a disco party happening. She was dancing and having a good time, but was nice enough to leave to show me the way to the tent. She had a flashlight with her. I hadn't noticed before, but in the tent there was nothing to sleep on, just bare floor. I had considered buying an inflatable air mattress while shopping for other camping items, but decided against it. Since it wasn't on the list I was sent, I assumed it must be provided. So my bed that night was on a cold, hard, muddy floor. I slept in my clothes in my sleeping bag. It was *freezing* in central Oregon in May, and it seemed as though I didn't have a cover at all. I already ached all over, and it was difficult to lie down on a hard floor without a pillow. I bunched up my jacket to make a pillow, but as soon as I managed to get somewhat comfortable, I started coughing! Eventually, somehow, I slept.

So that was my first day at the ranch, Rajneeshpuram, somewhere in the high desert near Antelope, Oregon. The next day wasn't any better.

Needless to say, I couldn't have imagined, in my most vivid imagination, the ranch to be as it was. Yes, I knew it was a farming community and there was lots of work to do—and that everything wasn't going to be convenient—a bed of roses, no, I didn't expect that. But I *did believe* I was going to a religious commune, ashram, or whatever term one chooses to use. All I know is that the ranch was as far removed from an ashram as Bermuda is from the North Pole. The only two occasions I was released from work to attend meditation (satsang), the news media was present and filming. We were instructed the day before to "look ecstatic."

All I knew in regard to myself was that I had better get well quickly, learn my way around, get my tent up and my belongings with me, go to bed earlier and get up earlier, if I were ever going to survive in this situation. I had to be totally self-reliant and my prime concern had to be to fulfill my job

obligation, if I never did anything else. After I did this and "proved" myself, I did make a lot of nice friends and didn't have such a daily struggle. Prior to that, it was a lonely way to go. Not only did I not fit into any of the regular categories of followers (being a summer worker, and not having been to Pune), but neither did I sleep around nor had I recently made a large donation to the foundation. *Everything* was against me!

Maybe I shouldn't have tried to hide the fact that I was sick. But I was afraid to say anything because I knew they wanted only healthy people who were able to put in a long day's work. No one there really knew me, since I hadn't been to Pune—and I felt that I had to prove myself. I was determined to bear anything for my love for Bhagwan. I remained sick for, I think, about eleven or twelve days before I finally told someone I was sick. I needed to see a doctor because I wasn't getting any better; in fact, I was getting worse. I could barely walk one block without panting, hardly able to breathe, and coughing. Meanwhile, the daily work schedule was from 7:30 AM to 8:00 PM *seven days a week*—which I somehow managed to fulfill (by the grace of God). I never would have believed that anyone could be sick in the presence of my Divine Master—and I mean that. This didn't fit! So I had to conclude that it must be a test of my devotion.

I don't know how I managed the first two weeks. Breakfast was over at 7:10 AM, and one must not be late for work, which began at 7:30 AM. I considered myself lucky if I had breakfast more than twice a week. Many times (later on) I was able to get myself to Magdalena dining hall *prior* to 7:00 AM, only to find there was no food left anyway. I survived through all this, and more, and felt good about it besides! . . . because this was the proof of my love for Bhagwan. Getting back to Magdalena around 9:00 PM was rough, too. Sometimes the food would be cold, or it would be like "lunches to go" in little brown bags. (I'd like to see Sheela or Arup or Vidya having these!) Sometimes I would decide it wasn't worth the bother, and go straight to my tent and go to sleep.

Let me explain why I finally decided to leave the ranch: Visits from the FBI and immigration authorities. Being instructed to lie or not say anything. The plans to build a hotel and gambling casino! Sheela lying. Future plans to live in underground cities prior to a six-year nuclear war, which is supposed to begin in ten years and destroy everything.

That last topic was the one that really did it for me. There was just *no way* I was going to be confined in close quarters *underground*(!) with these mindless people! If there really were only ten years left, I decided I should get back out in the world and enjoy the life God gave me. There are thousands in this group, and not *one* enlightened. The realization of the *true* situation, for me, was sad. I call it "The Death of a Dream."

I learned a lot in Oregon. I didn't value my freedom until after I gave it up. I didn't like the things going on at the ranch, nor the lifestyle, so I left. I simply didn't want to spend the next ten years of my life working seven days a week, twelve hours a day, because I was already thirty-seven years old.

Getting back to particulars: The surprise visits from immigration (on a regular basis).

As soon as a vehicle crossed the property line, the whole ranch knew. So a surprise visit was not possible, except perhaps by air. When the first immigration raid took place, I wasn't seeing things the way I do now, so I felt annoyed and protective of the sannyasins from other countries who wanted to stay in the United States and be near Bhagwan. I imagined what it would be like for myself in the same situation in India. I felt very sympathetic. It was also a little bit exciting and broke up the monotony of the job I had (working in a small trailer that had been converted into an electronics repair shop, attempting to fix assorted dirty, greasy, power tools—most of which were beyond repair. Fifty percent of the time there was nothing to do, but I had to stay there until 8:00 PM anyway).

Somehow, I don't know how, the ranch usually had advance warning that the immigration people were coming. There was a Motorola system of communication in every building, trailer, and vehicle. Some vehicles and locations had CB radios, and there were a good many hand-helds and beepers. With advance warnings of a raid, there was always time to prepare, and to let certain people know of the new code that would be used over the Motorola. All foreigners, those with accents especially, had assigned hiding places, which would vary. They would know where to go (and I suppose other details, if any) by this cryptic message that would come over the Motorola. One such phrase was something like "Send a taxi to pick up Sheela's dirty laundry." Occasionally there were private meetings for these people— classes to help them speak American-style and to discuss strategies for the situation.

Soon, these things began to disgust me, because it was such a complicated *mess,* so *shady* and *cheap* for a supposed "religious community." Someplace else I doubt I would have felt that way. In a sewing factory in downtown Los Angeles it would've fit better, you know what I mean?

Basically, what it was about is that all over the United States, sannyasins who were born in this country were marrying sannyasins from various other countries (especially England and Germany) so that the foreign sannyasins could legally remain in the United States, particularly on the ranch in Oregon. Perhaps one in ten marriages were for love. The rest were for the ashram.

One day my department coordinator, Swami Deva, assembled everyone in Gora Dept. for a special, private meeting. It seemed more serious than usual. He began describing various ways we might be surprised by the FBI, and what to do in such an event. I thought he had made an error, intending to say immigration authorities, but he *really was* preparing us now for the FBI! I was surprised, but nothing at the ranch could surprise me *that much* anymore. He described a scene where a busload of FBI men would appear one day as we were innocently picking vegetables. In this hypothetical situation, they all had guns too!

I was ready to pack my suitcases and say good bye for sure, except that I had run out of money! I had written to several friends asking to borrow some money and was awaiting their response even before this FBI stuff began.

Deva explained it like this: The FBI couldn't understand where all the money (millions!) was coming from to run the ranch and do all that we were doing. They suspected it was from smuggling and sales of drugs!

One day, Deva and I were sitting together on the bus going to lunch. I jokingly said to him: "This place thinks of *everything!* We should have a Department of Defense." He whispered confidentially back to me: "We do!"

There was literally nothing for me there anymore, but I was stuck until I could borrow some money. It was a nightmarish situation and I *had* to remain, like it or not. Every afternoon at 2:00 PM Bhagwan would drive through the ranch and we would all wait to greet him. I still loved him, but I stopped going. I couldn't participate in this fiasco any longer. I felt like a person whose love affair had just gone down the drain. I played the part of doing my job, but my heart was no longer in it. I was really worried what I would do if the money didn't come.

Then I went through a phase for about two weeks of doubting *myself!* Everybody else always seemed so happy! A few times I brought up my feelings to someone I felt I could trust to understand and they understood! But they gave me such beautiful advice that I felt ashamed for thinking and feeling the way I did and making judgments. All that mattered was to be near Bhagwan and do his work. I couldn't disagree, but deep down inside I didn't believe this was his work! I felt that I had surrendered my life to Sheela and Vidya. The ranch sometimes reminded me of a concentration camp and sometimes a mental institution.

I saw a lot of people were not very happy at all . . . but they were afraid to leave, or to even talk about it. It is in a way similar to being institutionalized. After being in India at the ashram for so many years (as long as ten years for some) and having given away all possessions, where to go and what to do now, especially in Oregon, or the United States in general, with no money, no car, no contacts? It must have been frightening. Even one to two years is a long time to be away from the job market.

Sheela and her inner circle lived in a complex of three adjoining, customized, deluxe mobile homes. It was hard to tell that their sprawling, luxurious living quarters had ever been just three mobile homes. The furnishings and accessories were in the finest taste, and the place could've been done by a professional decorator.

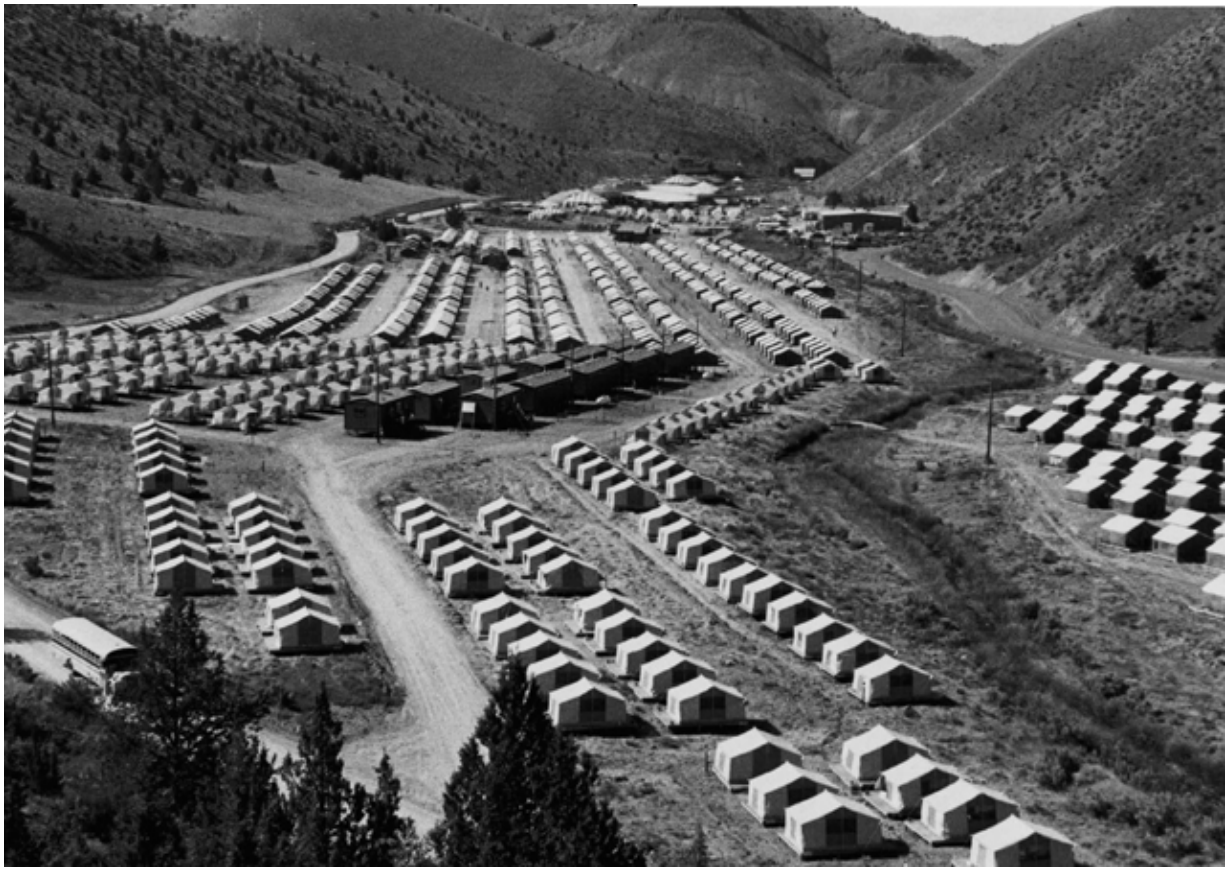
Twice I had occasion to go there. The first time was to put water in the battery (under the bathroom sink) that was used for her Motorola. (I was surprised to see a box of hair dye! I had been told not to use any soap or anything else that wasn't biodegradable, because it could ruin the sewage system.)

I hate to admit this, but foolish me, on my second visit I was going to make a donation! I had about $300, so I was donating $200. It was around 9:00 AM when I went. Several members of the inner circle group were just getting up, and they were dressed in beautiful sleeping ensembles. Arup was sitting at their elegant formal dining table having coffee, going over some papers with someone else. The table was set with lovely things, just like home! (Well, this *was* their home.) It was such a warm and inviting scene, I couldn't help but envy them. Sheela wasn't in sight. Perhaps she was sleeping. The particular Ma I went to see, Savita, wasn't up from bed yet and

I had to wait quite some time for her. (We peons got up between 5:00 and 6:00 AM *every day*!)

After making the donation I felt good! Didn't feel like such a nothing anymore. On *that* day, at *that* moment, if I had had a million dollars I would have given it all—my love for Bhagwan was overflowing!

By the time I had attended three of Sheela's special meetings, I could see the general format didn't deviate. It went something like this: A few jokes, anecdotes. Reprimands. A couple of dirty jokes. Special announcements ("good news"). More dirty jokes, anecdotes. She liked to schedule the meeting for around 7:30 or 8:00 PM. Then she'd be thirty minutes to one hour late and make her entrance. When the meetings were to be held in Magdalena dining hall, it was okay. But later on, after Buddha Hall was built, we had all the meetings there. So, we would leave work early to go to Buddha Hall and wait for the meeting. Sometimes she wouldn't show up, and after one to two hours of waiting, we'd be told that the meeting was canceled.



Aerial view of the temporary tent city set up for the annual World Festival at Rajneeshpuram.

July 30 was the Rajneeshpuram First Annual World Celebration. It was hard work for everyone to get things ready for the 6,000 people who would be coming. Some departments worked all night, as well as all day. Sheela promised we *all* would have three days off after the festival, as a reward for working so hard.

The festival *was* a beautiful success. Everyone who came for those five days was impressed and wanted to live on the ranch. I'd think silently to myself: "Oh, if only you knew!" I lived only for the mail.

After the festival, I received an order of job transfer to Hakim Sinai, to be the receptionist! The job included coordinating all of Vidya's private appointments in Rumi Dept. *What was this?* How was it possible for *me* to get such a job assignment in *Hakim Sinai* (which was in the nature of Top Secret/Classified/Authorized Personnel Only)? My imagination was reactivated . . . my hopes to be close to Bhagwan soared! I was on cloud nine!

I was due to have my three days off as Sheela had been promising repeatedly since before the festival. Swami Deva decided I should get only two days. Some got only one day, so I didn't press the issue.

I was very happy to work at Hakim Sinai. I felt like a human being again, one who was worth something. Did Bhagwan somehow know how very much I loved him and what I was going through? Did I have possibilities, in his eyes, or did Vidya think I had potential? Did she tell him so? I was glad they at least thought I was trustworthy. The ray of hope that I could have a meaningful job and that Bhagwan at least knew I was alive made everything okay. I put my whole being into that job and I loved it! I would be Vidya's devoted secretary for life!

One day as I was walking around the offices, I happened to notice that several of the secretaries were reading *and* answering mail *specifically* addressed to Bhagwan. Momentarily, I wondered about it in regard to myself. I had written him three or four letters, one in particular a very special love note, and he had sent me a loving, personal reply, which I cherished. Or had he? I let that thought go because *I did not* want to consider otherwise! Everything was going so well for me, and I planned to stay even after the summer was over. (No doubt I'd be asked. I got the position in Hakim Sinai, didn't I?)

Behind one very innocent-looking, unmarked door was Rumi Dept., where the most confidential of ashram business was discussed. If you set out to find Rumi, you wouldn't recognize it when you found it because it was not supposed to exist. First there was a tiny foyer, and there sat the paper shredder. Shredding important papers twice a day was one of my duties. I really didn't see anything worth mentioning, but one thing never ceased to give me pangs: shredding letters written to Bhagwan that he never saw, letters that people *believed* he received. But I made myself believe that he really had gotten my letters, and that the replies I had received *really were* his words to me!

For two weeks I was like a bird in the sky, until I was put out of Hakim Sinai in the middle of the afternoon one day, for no reason except that the whole thing had been a terrible mistake! It had just been a mistake, that job was never assigned to me at all, by anybody! It was just one big misunderstanding (perhaps a malfunction of a computer).

Like a dog with its tail between its legs, I took my framed photo of the Master from my desk, picked up my sweater, and headed for my tent. It all happened so fast! Reduced to nothing in less than fifteen minutes! I was supposed to report to my new job, but I didn't. I didn't care. I went straight home to my tent ready to die.

This feeling lasted only several hours, and then like a miracle I transcended everything so totally it was like magic. Instead of my ego being crushed and destroyed, I felt alive and new like never before! I *really didn't* care about anything here! All this *was not* necessary for me. Why should I throw my life away, worshipping Bhagwan and serving not only him, but Sheela, Vidya, anybody and everybody? I knew I could connect directly with the divine on my own because I'd done it before!

So I went to Magdalena the next morning (my new job) and played the part, totally detached from everything, trusting the divine to get me out from this ranch and back home to Los Angeles. I didn't let anyone know I was finished with being a so called sannyasin, finished being a slave and shoved around, having nothing, and eating tofu every day. I was on a different plateau of consciousness, because I had been shoved to the edge of the one I had been on. It was my choice to jump up or jump down. I chose to jump up! If I

hadn't, I'd still be in Magdalena right now swinging that mop on Saturday night, instead of writing this story! (Do-it-yourself lobotomy!)

A few days before I left the ranch, there was a pep talk for everyone from Sheela. It was her usual routine of dirty jokes, her sweet smile as she reminded us all: "You don't *deserve anything.* So remember, if you do get anything, it's a gift." She instructed us to stop gossiping and stop with our petty complaints, and to think only of working to accomplish Bhagwan's vision (for the underground city), for *we* were the "chosen ones."

I chuckled to myself as I patted the place where I had my money tucked away. Exploitation in the name of love, *and unforgivable!*

The only haunting memory I still carry with me is of this little two-year-old baby I used to see every day wandering around the ranch by itself; bewildered big eyes, fingers in mouth, no smile, in a diaper and barefoot, dirty, neglected . . . and two skinny dogs with their ribs showing. I feel sorry for *them!* The others have a choice. Or do they?

—*Oregon Magazine,* October–December 1983

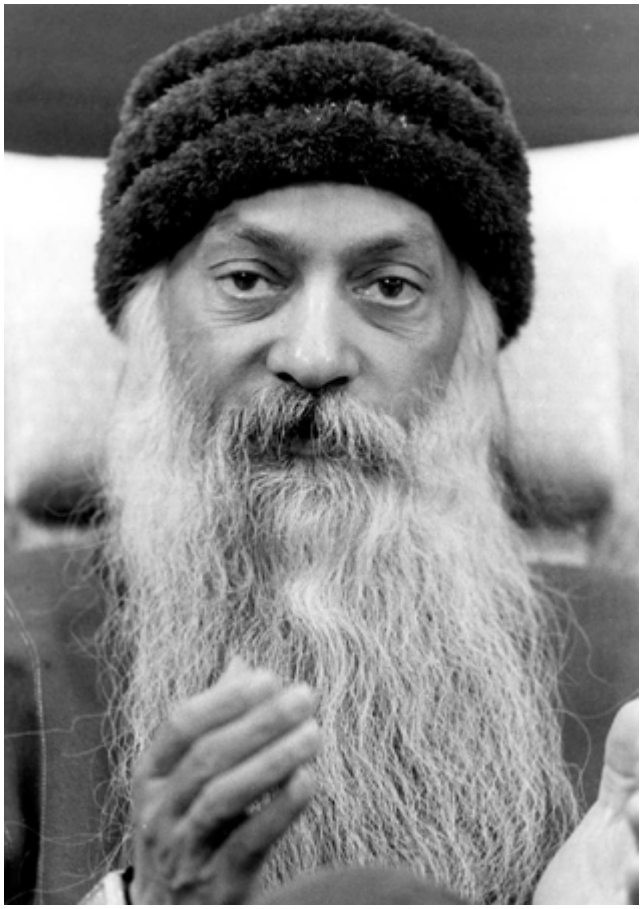
BHAGWAN'S HYPNOTIC SPELL

Experts describe Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh as a master hypnotist

WIN McCORMACK

Followers of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh believe their guru to be a "perfect master," but the question is: perfect master of what? Some counselors and researchers in the field of mind control and cults believe that the guru is in fact a master of various techniques of inducing altered states of consciousness, techniques that they say he and his assistants use to bind followers to him and his organization.

Josh Baran runs Sorting It Out in Berkeley, California, a support organization for people who have left spiritual groups. In the course of his work, Baran has interviewed more than 2,000 former members of such groups, including approximately fifty former followers of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Baran believes that the Bhagwan and his assistants are extremely skilled in a wide range of techniques for manipulating and controlling people, many of the techniques derived from Eastern religions. "He is quite fluent in various altered states of consciousness, much more than other cult leaders I know of," Baran says. "His techniques include chanting, meditation, Sufi dancing, staring into lights for extended periods of time, and powerful music, all of which induce altered states of mind. What went on at his ashram in Pune (Poona), India, was literally a smorgasbord of altered states of mind." Baran notes that Rajneesh has numerous experts in psychology and related fields on his staff at Rajneeshpuram.



Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh.

Hilly Zeitlin, a clinical social worker and codirector of Options for Personal Transition in Berkeley, an organization that deals with cult involvement and related religious issues, has made a study of techniques of hypnotic induction that are used by cults. Zeitlin, who has interviewed about half a dozen former and current followers of the Bhagwan, believes that Rajneesh is a master hypnotist. “As far as I’m concerned,” Zeitlin says, “Rajneesh is one of the best hypnotists I have ever encountered. The way he uses language, his tone of voice, the way he sequences ideas . . . all are essentially hypnotic.” Zeitlin defines hypnosis as “a process of communication whereby one or more people go into a trance.” He says that “the art of hypnosis is the art of being vague, while pretending that you’re being profound,” an art that he thinks the Bhagwan practiced masterfully in his lectures to his disciples at Pune. “Rajneesh,” he adds, “can be even vaguer now by not saying anything at all. Now you can project onto him whatever you want to believe.”

Kathleen McLaughlin, associate professor of religious studies at Lewis and Clark College, and her husband, Robert Beatty, who teaches meditation at the Ariadne Professional Center in Milwaukee, Oregon, concur with Zeitlin's assessment of Rajneesh's skills as a hypnotist. McLaughlin and Beatty were at the University of Pune in from 1977 to 1978 and heard Rajneesh lecture at his ashram on several occasions. "His use of language is wonderful," McLaughlin says. "He is a hypnotic and beautiful speaker who is profoundly psychically connected to his audience.

"We have an immature understanding of spirituality in the West," McLaughlin says, "and since we don't believe in psychic phenomena, we are very vulnerable to them. In India it is understood that anybody who meditates can develop psychic powers—the notion is commonly held that there are such powers and that you can develop them if you want to." McLaughlin and Beatty believe that Western, academically trained intellectuals are especially vulnerable to Eastern techniques of trance induction. "Intellectuals are particularly vulnerable to this because they have been trained to use their heads, but not their emotions," McLaughlin says, "and these techniques bypass critical, rational thought."

According to Adrian Greek, a family counselor and codirector of the Positive Action Center in Portland, an organization that counsels current and ex-cult members and their families, the first experience of a new Rajneesh recruit with hypnotic trance induction, now that the Bhagwan no longer speaks in public, is usually through what Rajneeshees call "dynamic meditation." In dynamic meditation, participants alternate "deep, fast breathing"—i.e., hyperventilation— with spastic movement and complete stillness over the course of an hour. Greek believes that the process of hyperventilation produces an "artificial, druglike high" that can be very addictive.

Margaret Singer, professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, who is considered by many to be the world's leading expert on mind control, agrees with Greek about the potential effects of hyperventilation. "Hyperventilation produces a high feeling and a loss of critical thought and judgment," she says, "and people can interpret this normal response to excessive breathing as ecstasy."

Zeitlin contends that the entire social system of the Rajneesh organization functions to create hypnotic suggestibility in its members. "There is an

intense effort to break down normal ways by which people measure themselves, under the guise of going beyond or transcending the ego," he says, "and all of this is done in a hypnotically binding way. They overload the circuits of the conscious mind and then present you with the alternative of 'inner consciousness.' Meanwhile, dependence on the group has developed." Zeitlin has found in his interviews with ex-Rajneeshees that they are "extremely psychologically regressed" and "stuck in their feelings." He says that their capacity to relate to others and articulate their feelings is "drastically reduced."

Rajneeshees maintain that the actual purpose of techniques such as those used in dynamic meditation is to help people break through barriers of emotional repression, and some of Rajneesh's critics concede that such techniques, in the proper context, could be useful for spiritual and psychological growth. "In dynamic meditation, people do break through their blocks, both positive and negative ones," Beatty says. "People who were depressed start to feel better. The really sneaky thing is that there is nothing wrong with it by itself."

"By themselves, these techniques—even hypnosis—are not bad," echoes Baran. "They are only bad when they are used to control and enfeeble people. The problem is that Rajneesh and his assistants are misusing these techniques to get people to become followers."

—*Oregon Magazine,* February 1984

A MIND'S EYE VIEW OF 1984

Orwell understood the limits of mind control

WIN McCORMACK

The original inspiration for George Orwell's novel *1984* lay in his experiences as a journalist and soldier in Spain from 1936 to 1937, during the height of the battle to save the Spanish Republic from General Franco's fascist insurrection. Orwell discovered that the Soviet Union, while posing as a defender of the republic and a liberator of the Spanish people, was actually working to undermine the republic and to crush the social revolution then under way.

It was the enormous discrepancy between the illusion and the reality of Soviet behavior in Spain, and the Soviets' almost complete success in obscuring their real role in that country through their Ministry of Propaganda, that caught Orwell's attention. The experience planted in his mind the seed that was later to germinate into *1984.*

In *1984,* the Soviets' Ministry of Propaganda in Spain became the Ministry of Truth in the fictional state of Oceania; the ministry's function, contrary to its title, is to propagate lies. Orwell was one of the first writers to identify, among the twentieth century's many novel horrors, the emergence of the horror that has come to be called "mind control." He was also one of the first, if not the first, to identify correctly the essential technique for accomplishing this horror: the psychosocial isolation of the individual and the restriction of his independent access to information.

In a pioneering 1961 study called *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of "Brainwashing"in China,* Yale psychologist Robert Lifton in effect rewrote Orwell's *1984* in academic, empirical terms. "The most basic feature of the thought-reform environment, the psychological

current upon which all else depends, is the control of human communication," Lifton concludes. "Through this milieu control the totalist environment seeks to establish domain over not only the individual's communication with the outside (all that he sees and hears, reads and writes, experiences and expresses), but also— in its penetration of his inner life— over what we may speak of as his communication with himself."

Lifton's seminal study of mind control in Communist China has since become the primary theoretical source for understanding another new horror: the proliferation of contemporary cults like Jim Jones's People's Temple, the Reverend Moon's Unification Church, the Church of Scientology, and other similar groups.

According to scholars, these organizations manage to achieve the same degree of totalistic control over their followers that Marxist dictatorships sometimes do. They do so, usually while purporting to be religious groups, by using parallel and equally sophisticated techniques of mental manipulation.

Their brainwashing process, according to students of the matter, severs individuals' connections to outside supports like family and friends. Simultaneously, the ordeal ruptures their inner sense of identity and self-reliance, making them, finally, totally emotionally helpless and dependent on the group's particular charismatic Big Brother.

Encouragingly, the bleak and utterly pessimistic and cynical vision of Orwell's *1984* has not, so far, been fulfilled, except for brief periods of time in relatively short-lived circumstances. In both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, in recent years, we have seen the emergence of open and partially tolerated political and social dissidence. A majority of mankind at this moment lives under the oppression of authoritarian regimes of the left or the right, but not under the kind of totalistic and hermetic mind control feared by Orwell.

As for cults, it has been proven time and time again that these totalitarian facsimiles, because they do not have the military or police power to keep their members in check forever, are transient in nature. We may see, in the real year of 1984, the cataclysmic collapse of a nefarious cult here in Oregon. The modern technology of mind control, it appears, is effective in quelling the human drive for freedom—but only temporarily.

Orwell, actually, understood this perfectly well, for he wrote, in a passage toward the end of *1984*: "They could not alter your feelings; for that matter, you could not alter them yourself, even if you wanted to. They could lay bare in the utmost detail everything you had ever done or said or thought; but the human heart, whose workings were mysterious even to yourself, remained impregnable."

—*Oregon Magazine,* February 1984

BHAGWAN'S MIND CONTROL

An ex-disciple describes Rajneesh brainwashing methods

WIN McCORMACK

"Before I left for Pune [Poona, India], I was a very capable, articulate, professional woman," claims Roselyn Smith, a forty-one-year-old social worker who was known as Ma Prem Sugatha when she followed the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. "When I got back I was in a totally hypnotic state. I was absolutely helpless."

Although Rajneesh officials categorically deny that they practice mind control in any form, some ex-Rajneeshees, as well as some professional counselors who have studied the Rajneesh organization and interviewed ex-members like Smith, think otherwise. Smith believes that she was the subject of a very sophisticated program of mental manipulation while a member of Rajneesh's "pseudo-religious, totalistic cult."

Adrian Greek and Josh Baran, counselors in Portland and Berkeley, California, respectively, who deal with the social readjustment problems of ex-cult followers, think after recently interviewing Smith that her perceptions of her Rajneesh experiences are accurate. Greek and Baran say that the experiences she describes are similar to those described by other former members of the group.

Smith, who holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Boston University and a master's degree in social work from Arizona State University, was a tenured instructor in psychology at Aims Community College in Colorado in 1980 when she decided to journey to the Bhagwan's ashram in Pune, India, to seek enlightenment. In her first week at the ashram, she recounts, she plunged into a four-day "breath therapy" group in which

participants did "slow, deep, forceful" breathing for hours on end in order to achieve a state of emotional regression and catharsis. On the third day, she says, she went into a cathartic state—"an altered state, like a trance"—that lasted for about four hours. "I went through a regression where I felt like I was a baby again," she recalls. "When I opened my eyes I saw this huge poster of Bhagwan. I looked at him and felt he was a savior, an incarnation of love."

Smith's next experience at the ashram, she relates, was a five-day "intensive enlightenment" group. Greek considers the enlightenment intensive to be a virtual paradigm of the Rajneesh "resocialization" process. In an enlightenment intensive, Greek explains, participants spend up to seventeen hours a day, in five-minute intervals, alternately answering and listening to a partner answer the question "Who Am I?" Participants change partners every forty minutes and are not allowed to have any contact with nonparticipants on days the group is in progress. Greek thinks the exercise "plunges people into their unconscious and cuts them off from past support systems without letting them establish any real relationships in the present" a result that, he says, is the very foundation of mind control.

Smith says that her next experience at the Pune ashram, that of floating in a Rajneesh "samadhi" (enlightenment) tank—a light-proof, windproof sensory-deprivation tank filled with heated saltwater and resembling a coffin—was much more disorienting for her than the enlightenment intensive. Smith says she floated in her assigned samadhi tank for an hour a day on two consecutive days, until she went into a "deep, penetrating catharsis" in which she sobbed uncontrollably for five straight hours about a herd of horses she saw brutally slaughtered as a child. Smith calls this cathartic experience "a nightmare."

"You'd think by this point that with all my training in psychology I'd realize I was tampering with something dangerous," Smith says. "But I believed Rajneesh was an enlightened master and that he knew what he was doing." Smith had taught a course on mind control at Aims Community College.

Smith says that the capstone of her indoctrination at Pune was a fourteen-day "insight group." It is this type of group, under the designation "encounter group," whose free-for-all sexuality and shocking physical violence are portrayed in the film *Ashram,* made by a German ex-sannyasin. After the

worldwide publicity surrounding the mass cult suicide at Jonestown, Guyana, in November 1978, ashram officials proscribed further violence in the encounter group and changed its name, but Smith says that verbal abuse and orgiastic sex were still common in the group when she went through it.

"The purpose of the insight group," in Smith's opinion, "was to break you down completely, to destroy any remnant of self-confidence or self-trust you had left, any sense at all of your own integrity." Smith says that by the end of the insight group she was "in a total state of mind control. I was," she says, "a goner. A total follower. A fanatic."

Smith left the Pune ashram in the spring of 1981 on vacation. Soon after her departure, the Bhagwan, whose Rajneesh Foundation had recently been assessed millions of dollars in back taxes by the Indian government, also departed. Smith (who was unable to get a professional teaching or social-work job while wearing the red garb and mala of a sannyasin) worked as a massage therapist for a year in order to raise the money to go to the new ashram in Oregon. She reached Rajneeshpuram in June 1982, only to leave two months later when she contracted a severe amoebic infection. After leaving the ranch, she sought medical care and psychological counseling in San Francisco.

Smith says that, even with the help of expert counseling, it has taken her well over a year to begin to recover from the Rajneesh experience. "After those groups, I had no trust left in my own decision making," she says. "It can sometimes take years for ex-Rajneeshees to regain a sense of self-confidence and self-worth," says Baran.

Smith also says that she is "very ethically concerned" about what may be happening to followers at Rajneeshpuram, which she says is "in some ways like a gulag . . . the closest thing to a concentration camp I've ever seen. Most of the public has no idea of what's really going on there," she alleges. "They don't realize what mind control is, that when someone takes over your mind you're absolutely helpless. . . . I had techniques used on me that were far more subtle and more powerful than I could have ever comprehended. I'm an example of how powerful those techniques are."

— *Oregon Magazine,* March 1984

SEX: BHAGWAN'S BIGGEST TRICK

Enforced sexual freedom is not freedom at all

WIN McCORMACK

"Sex is just the beginning, not the end," professes Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, who first achieved notoriety in India in the late sixties and early seventies when he began publicly advocating that his disciples practice free love. But what end does Rajneesh have in mind for his disciples when he incites them to sexual promiscuity?

According to some commentators on the subject, the real end Rajneesh seeks for his disciples in this area is most likely the loss of their ability to form stable love relationships; such relationships might jeopardize his psychological hegemony over their lives. Rajneesh's much vaunted ideology of sexual liberation—besides being a calculated ploy to attract followers—is a major component, if not *the* major component, of his particular cult's system of psychosocial control, say the commentators.

"All cults control sex, in one way or another," asserts Margaret Singer, a highly respected expert on mind control. "Either they prohibit it completely, or they enforce participation in it. Either way, what the cult leader is attempting to do is to prevent pair bonding and to stop couples from leaving because they love each other more than they love the group. The leader who enforces participation achieves a much greater degree of subjugation of his followers' wills, because he takes actual control of this most intimate area of a person's life."

Swami Anand Teertha places a mala on a sannyasin during initiation ceremonies at the annual World Festival.

Ex-disciples of Rajneesh allege that the tendency of his cult is definitely to enforce sexual participation. Ex-disciple Roselyn Smith, who went through six months of therapy groups at Rajneesh's ashram in Pune (Poona), India, from 1980 to 1981, says that coercive psychological pressure was applied at the ashram—especially on women—to enforce participation in sexually promiscuous behavior and in the ashram's notorious group-sex orgies.

"The lingo at the ashram was 'say yes' and 'say yes to life,"' Smith says. "One guy made an approach to me and I wasn't the least bit interested, but I felt guilty for refusing him because I felt I wasn't 'saying yes' to life." Smith says that women who refused to participate in ashram sex orgies were castigated by group leaders for being "selfish," "frigid," and "rejecting."

Allegedly, attempts to enforce sexual participation at the Pune ashram did not always stop at psychological pressure, but sometimes extended to the use

of violence. Ex-disciple Eckart Floether reports witnessing the rape of a female sannyasin by two men during an encounter group called "samarpan" (surrender). When he tried to intervene, he says, the group leader prevented him from doing so, explaining afterward: "She needed to be raped." Ex-follower David Boadella reports an incident in which a woman fled an ashram encounter group after being raped and had to undergo months of counseling outside the ashram in order to overcome the resulting psychological trauma. The infamous film *Ashram,* made by ex-disciple Wolfgang Dobrowolny, shows an attempted gang rape during an ashram encounter group.

According to Boadella, sannyasins in Pune were also tacitly, if not explicitly, encouraged to participate in prostitution as a means of earning their livelihoods. Boadella says the activity was known at the ashram as "getting sweets." The chief inspector of the Pune police was quoted by an English national newspaper, the *Daily Star,* in June 1981 as saying: "Prostitution by the [Rajneesh] cult's girl disciples reached disgraceful proportions. It became epidemic."

Not surprisingly, venereal diseases, particularly gonorrhea and herpes, were also reportedly epidemic at the Pune ashram. Ex-disciple Smith says that there were "tremendous gonorrhea epidemics" at the ashram while she was there and tells of one man who infected some ten female disciples with the disease in the course of a weeklong Tantra group.

Probably due to this experience, medical authorities at Rajneeshpuram reportedly screen new arrivals very carefully for sexual diseases. Ex-disciple Susan Harfouche, who was at the ranch in the summer of 1982, says that the names of new arrivals who had been medically approved for promiscuous sex were posted on a bulletin board in the outer chamber of the commune's dining hall where sannyasins gathered after dinner to choose their bed partners for the night. Nowadays, new arrivals reportedly are required to wear a single orange bead on their mala necklaces until they have passed the commune's stringent venereal disease tests.

Ex disciples Smith and Harfouche say that they did not witness any sex orgies while they were at Rajneeshpuram. "They are much more careful at the ranch," says Smith. "They told us they had to be careful about journalists penetrating the groups and that we couldn't do some of the things that were done at Pune." Smith and Harfouche also note that the commune's grueling

work schedule of twelve hours a day, seven days a week, did not leave much time or energy for hours long orgies.

Smith and Harfouche both believe, however, that an unspoken policy of discouraging committed relationships was definitely in effect at Rajneeshpuram when they were there, on behalf of the guru who once called the institution of the family "the most hindering phenomenon for all human progress, a symbol of all that is ugly." Smith argues that the ranch's extremely crowded living conditions themselves work to discourage intimacy. "How can you be intimate with someone if there are two other couples in your bedroom?" she asks. "It's much easier to have depersonalized sex and then never see the person again." Harfouche claims that if a man and a woman gave signs of forming an ongoing relationship, commune authorities would give them assignments in different parts of the ranch or at different times of day in order to keep them apart.

"This depersonalization of sex and frustration of intimate relationships is simply designed to heighten the feeling of a personal relationship with Bhagwan," sums up Adrian Greek, a Portland cult expert. But the most telling description of the emotional end result of Rajneesh-style sexuality may have been given by Ma Satya Bharti in her 1981 book, *Drunk on the Divine.* Bharti describes the emotional aftereffects of an ashram orgy on a female disciple as follows: "She felt herself losing control of her body, losing control of her mind. She was disappearing, vanishing into thin air. Then there was nothingness, emptiness."

— *Oregon Magazine,* April 1984

BHAGWAN'S FLOCK

Is Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh the guru of the midlife crisis?

WIN McCORMACK

"Come Follow Me," pleaded Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh in the title of one of his earliest books, and, over the course of the last decade, thousands of disciples— principally from the United States, England, West Germany, and Australia—have heeded his plea. What motivates these disciples, and why do they follow this guru who requires them to wear red clothes and a necklace with a locket containing his picture, a guru who demands that they labor twelve hours a day, seven days a week, for free to construct his fanciful utopian city in the middle of a desert?

Experts in the field of cult psychology like Margaret Singer, a University of California clinical psychologist, argue that, contrary to popular assumption, it is not pathological individuals who join. Rather, it is normal people who are most likely to be seduced into joining cult organizations.

"The better socialized, 'normal' person is more at risk," claims Singer. "He or she has learned to be obedient, trusting, respectful of authority figures, and above all to control and focus his or her attention. The more psychopathological, 'not normal,' nonsocialized person is just the opposite —disobedient, nontrusting, disrespectful, and unable to focus attention for an extended period of time. It is extremely difficult to program someone if you can't get him to pay attention to the message you are trying to implant in his mind."

Singer began her career studying American veterans of Chineserun Korean War brainwashing camps. Her research showed that it was the most

antisocial of the American Korean War prisoners— those who had been in repeated trouble with the authorities in both civilian and military life—who were best able to resist the mental and ideological onslaught of their Chinese jailers. "They simply refused to listen to what the Chinese had to say to them," Singer remembers.

Many central Oregonians have expressed astonishment at the large number of highly educated and professional people who follow Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. A survey done last year by the psychology department at the University of Oregon seemingly confirmed this perception. It found that 64 percent of the seven hundred followers queried at Rajneeshpuram reported that they had graduated from a university, as compared with 17 percent of the Oregon population as a whole, and that 81 percent said they came from professional and white-collar families, as compared to 27 percent for the rest of the Oregon population.

To experienced students of cults, findings like these are not surprising in the least. Jean Merritt, a psychiatric social worker who has been counseling former cult members and their families since 1973, has said that cults "typically go after single, white, young, middle-and upper-class people who have been taught to be open to innovative ideas and to try new experiences. They are often intelligent young men and women who are extremely idealistic and altruistic." Singer has stated that cults "don't want Chicanos or blacks. They don't want the streetwise who'll cause trouble, who know there's no free lunch. They want the upwardly mobile who come complete with dowries."

Cult experts caution, however, that almost anyone can be susceptible to the blandishments of a cult at certain stages of life. "All of us at various times are more vulnerable than at other times," Singer says. "Almost anyone who is in a period of loneliness is in a vulnerable period in which he or she might get taken in by the flattery and deceptive lures that cults use to recruit new members."

Although, according to the experts, other major cults like the Moonies, Hare Krishnas, and Scientologists direct their recruiting efforts mostly at young people in the throes of adolescence or the difficult transition from adolescence to adulthood, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is increasingly coming to be perceived as the "guru of the midlife crisis." Many visitors to

Rajneeshpuram have been surprised at the number of middle-aged and older sannyasins at the ranch.

"Rajneesh definitely seems to aim at the midlife crisis," comments Kathleen McLaughlin, professor of religious studies at Lewis and Clark College and a past member of the board of directors of the Positive Action Center, a family-counseling organization in Portland that attempts to ameliorate the hurtful effects of cult membership on families of cult members. "The excessive idealism about life and its possibilities we hold in this country, and perhaps other Western countries, does not match reality, and many people, once they've 'made it,' quickly become dissatisfied. Rajneesh, in his message, hooks into this idealism and into the potential disillusionment of midlife."

Adrian Greek, the Positive Action Center's codirector, agrees: "A good number of the people attracted to Bhagwan are burnt out professionals—attorneys, ministers, doctors—who wanted to get out of the rat race, who were looking for freedom from responsibility and structure and for a new kind of fulfillment. This is exactly what Rajneesh promises."

A case in point may be that of thirty eight year old Swami Prem Niren, né Philip Toelkes, director of the Rajneesh Legal Services Corporation. In an article about him in the January 1984 issue of the *American Lawyer,* Toelkes-Niren explains his 1980 abandonment of a partnership in the prestigious Los Angeles law firm of Manatt, Phelps, Rothenberg, and Tunney—an act that followed his 1977 abandonment of his first marriage—by recalling a persistent feeling of "unfulfilledness." (He is now married to Ma Prem Isabel, director of public relations for Rajneeshpuram.)

"Somehow I thought once I became a partner everything would be wonderful," Toelkes-Niren is quoted as saying. "Then I would be comfortable and secure and fulfilled . . . it didn't work." Toelkes-Niren is quoted as saying that now, instead of being motivated by a quest for money or ego gratification, he is motivated by "my love for Bhagwan."

Greek finds the attempt of people like Toelkes-Niren to solve a life stage crisis by entering a cult to be sadly, if not tragically, ironic. "In a sense, it's their own choice," Greek says. "But what they don't realize going in is that they are going to be controlled by someone else. They don't realize that they are going to have to face the same problems they faced on the outside, only now they are going to have to face them under someone else's control."

—*Oregon Magazine,* May 1984

BHAGWAN'S DEVIOUS TRAP

Leaving Bhagwan's Buddhafield may not be all that easy

WIN McCORMACK

"If people want to leave, that is O.K.," read the confidential minutes of a coordinators meeting at Rajneeshpuram on November 14, 1982. "No need to sneak away. . . . Bhagwan said not to worry why people left." But does the Bhagwan really let his disciples leave his nest so easily?

Professional students of cults, as well as ex-members of the Rajneesh community, confirm that, indeed, the Rajneesh organization—unlike other, similar cult groups—does not utilize physical force either to recruit new members or to restrain followers from leaving. Rather, say these authorities, Rajneesh prevents his disciples from leaving his "Buddhafield" by trapping them in an intricate, devious web of mind control.

"The Rajneesh indoctrination process is a socialization process, involving the loss of personal identity and the dissolution of the ego boundary into the group," explains Adrian Greek, codirector of the Positive Action Center, Portland's major cult watching organization. "This happens, in part, through the initiation rite of sannyas, in which the new recruit is required to give up his past identity and to adopt new clothes and a new name." Greek recalls that Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh once wrote: "The personality is not something to be protected; it is something to be destroyed."

"The Rajneesh indoctrination process depends on certain psychological and spiritual assumptions," further explains Hilly Zeitlin, a clinical social worker and cult expert in Berkeley, California. "The major psychological assumption is that emotional repression is the key to the neurotic bind of

Westerners, and that the solution lies in the catharsis of emotional release. The Rajneesh community invites recruits to strip themselves of their psychological defenses in the name of emotional release and personal growth. But what the recruits don't realize is that at every step of the way they are getting more suggestible to a new belief system."

"Rajneesh and his group leaders used therapy techniques to open people up emotionally," remembers ex-disciple Eckart Floether, who lived at the Bhagwan's ashram in Pune (Poona), India, in 1979. "When people reached the point of catharsis, the group leader would hook them by putting a picture of Rajneesh in front of them and saying, 'Now give your life to Rajneesh; he will take care of you!' People were basically hooked at their most vulnerable moment."

"These techniques lead to extreme states of vulnerability," affirms Kathleen McLaughlin, a professor of religious studies at Lewis and Clark College who attended Rajneesh meditation and therapy groups in Pune from 1977 to 1978. "The question is: What do you give people then? Rajneesh used these techniques to blast people open and then fill them up with himself and his ideas. As you opened up emotionally, you found this very authoritarian structure there trying to take control of you."

On the spiritual-intellectual level, says Zeitlin, the key to understanding the Rajneesh socialization process is the concept of the "double bind." This concept was developed in the course of studies of families with schizophrenic children. The studies found that when parents overloaded their children with contradictory statements over too long a period of time, the children were driven insane.

"Rajneesh presents himself as a perfect master,"' Zeitlin explains. "Therefore, if you see contradictions, if something doesn't make sense to you, it is evidence that there is something wrong with you and that you need to go to a higher spiritual level. This puts people in a double bind, and the only way for them to resolve it—besides going mad—is to surrender to Rajneesh's authority." Floether has alleged that many disciples in Pune were driven to madness by their Rajneesh experiences, and that some were even driven to suicide.

Sannyasins during the morning "hoo meditation" inside the ranch's giant mandir (meeting hall).

Greek agrees that the cumulative mental stress of a double-bind situation will eventually wear down a recruit's mental resistance. "The paradoxes and contradictions overwhelm the mind," says Greek. "Eventually people set them aside. People reach a point where they give up and stop thinking for themselves." Greek contends that this mental stress is compounded by the additional stress of long hours of exhausting physical labor and of repetitive lectures and meditation sessions, and also by the stress resulting from the lack of emotionally fulfilling, monogamous relationships at Rajneeshpuram.

Greek goes on to postulate that one of the principal psychological mechanisms by which Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh controls his followers is the manipulation of guilt. "They induce guilt by setting up a perfect standard for you to follow, one that is humanly impossible to attain," Greek says. "Then, if you feel bad, it's your own fault. The only way for you to get rid of the guilt is to work harder and try to be more perfect, which in turn leads to more

guilt. You always feel pressure to change—and guilt—because you always fall short of 'enlightenment.'"

Ex-Rajneesh disciple Roselyn Smith lived at Rajneesh's ashram in India from 1980 to 1981, and then lived at Rajneeshpuram in the summer of 1982, until she contracted a severe amoebic infection that required her to leave. She maintains that Rajneesh hooks his followers into staying with him by making them feel badly about themselves. "Many people who come to Bhagwan aren't helpless, hopeless drifters," she says. "Many come because they have high ideals to which they think Rajneesh also aspires. What happens when they get there is that they are made to believe that they are failures. The Rajneesh leaders systematically break down their self-confidence until they are in a state of hopeless dependence"—a dependence reinforced, she argues, by the physical and social isolation of the ranch.

"Then, when you go back into the outside world, it's so disorienting," she says. "That's why a lot of people don't leave. . . . You can't leave, you're so scared. It's a nightmare to be out on your own if you don't trust yourself, if you have no confidence in your own decision making."

"I think it's so unfair for people to say, 'Oh, it's their own fault, all they have to do is leave,'" she says. "People don't understand what mind control is, that when someone takes over your mind you're powerless to leave. It doesn't matter if you have the physical freedom to leave. You don't have the psychological freedom."

— *Oregon Magazine,* June/July 1984

RAJNEESH'S PSEUDO-RELIGION

Expedience turned a cult into a "religion"

WIN McCORMACK

Civil libertarians in Oregon have rallied to the defense of Bhagwan Shree ("Sir God") Rajneesh (real name: Chandra Mohan Rajneesh) and his followers on the grounds that the United States Constitution protects the free exercise of their religious beliefs. The attorney general of Oregon filed suit against Rajneeshpuram, alleging that the "essentially religious" nature of the city violates constitutional guarantees of separation of church and state. But the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) grudgingly granted Chandra Mohan Rajneesh third-preference status as a "religious teacher." And last year, Oregon State University Professor Ronald O. Clarke, who received a $2,000 grant from the Oregon Committee for the Humanities to study Rajneesh's "religious teachings," concluded after a summer's reading that "anyone at all familiar with Eastern religious traditions would immediately recognize Rajneeshism as a religion."

However, in an April 1983 letter to Portland physician James G. Perkins, who is involved in litigation with the Rajneesh Foundation, the American Consulate in Bombay, India, stated: "According to our information, the Rajneesh Foundation in India at no time claimed itself as a religion, nor was its leader, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, ever known here as a founder of a religion.

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh holds court at the annual World Festival.

Kathleen McLaughlin, a professor of religious studies at Lewis and Clark College, visited the city of Pune (Poona), India, location of Rajneesh's former ashram, from 1977 to 1978. She confirms that Rajneesh was not accepted as a religious leader or teacher in India.

"He was not regarded by very many Indians as a spiritual teacher," McLaughlin says. " In India, there is a long tradition of what gurus are. One of the things that's clear is that if someone is an enlightened person, he doesn't go around spreading discontent and hatred. The way Rajneesh and his followers antagonized people in India inevitably meant that he was not perceived as an enlightened person."

McLaughlin says that Rajneesh's insistence on exalting himself above all other living spiritual teachers is alien to Indian religious practice.

"He was always making comments like 'Buddha, Jesus, and I think such and such,"' she says. "Naïve Westerners took this as a sign of his authority. To the Indians, however, it was a sign of his lack of authority. In India, a real

religious teacher never points to himself, never exalts himself." McLaughlin describes Rajneesh's unilateral adoption of the title "Bhagwan," which in Hindi means "Lord," or "God," as "blasphemous."

"It is not blasphemous to be called Bhagwan, if your followers decide to call you that," she explains. "It *is* blasphemous to call yourself 'Bhagwan.' The claim he makes that he is 'the one' is completely atypical of Indian holy men."

McLaughlin accuses Rajneesh of distorting and perverting other major elements of the Hindu religious tradition. "His use of the term *sannyasin* [to designate his followers], for instance, is just a mockery as far as I'm concerned—a deliberate mockery," she says. "In India, 'sannyasin' means 'renunciate,' one who has renounced worldly possessions and worldly desires [in order] to wander the land as a beggar, wearing the holy color of orange. When you become a sannyasin for Rajneesh you don't take any kind of vows of renunciation. All you do is pay the organization some money and promise to wear a mala and red clothes. That is a deliberate affront to Hindu values."

McLaughlin finds Rajneesh's promotion—under the guise of teaching Tantric spirituality—of unrestrained sexual indulgence and promiscuity and, in the Pune period, of wild, violent sex orgies, particularly offensive.

"What he teaches has only the most superficial resemblance to the Hindu Tantra," she says. "The Tantra is a very disciplined path of spirituality, and, if there's anything Rajneesh doesn't teach, it's spiritual discipline. Tantric sexual practice is nonorgasmic. It's not just going out and sleeping around. You have a partner chosen by your teacher, and it can be years before you even have any sexual contact with that partner at all. It's not a one-night stand." McLaughlin calls Rajneesh's use, or misuse, of the Tantra "cheap, inaccurate, and inflammatory."

McLaughlin argues that Rajneeshism is not a religion at all, but purely and simply a cult. She distinguishes a cult from a religion by the former's lack of both a meaningful spiritual discipline and a real spiritual tradition.

"A real religion," she says, "is associated with a tradition. It has some historical lineage. Other masters are seen as part of the tradition, and they provide some checks and balances, and some humility. A cult, on the other hand, is a group run by a single charismatic leader who egotistically sets himself up as the single source of authority, as having a new revelation, as

the only 'enlightened one,' and, therefore, as superseding all other sources of authority. Buddha didn't set himself up that way. Moses and Jesus didn't set themselves up that way."

"Also," McLaughlin adds, "there is no ethical basis in the teachings of a cult, and that is another thing that distinguishes a cult from a religion." Interestingly, Professor Clarke notes that Rajneesh "is critical of all forms of morality based on absolutes, rules, or commandments. The true moral person," in Clarke's reading of the Rajneesh belief system, "is one who is not trying to do right, not trying to avoid wrong." Authorities on cults in general say that a cult's characteristic lack of any sense of morality or ethical limits can lead, internally, to severe and unconscionable abuse and exploitation of its followers and, externally, to dangerous involvement in criminal activities such as prostitution and drug smuggling.

The Rajneesh organization did not lay claim to the status of a religion until after the INS began contemplating deportation proceedings against the Bhagwan. In a December 5, 1981, circular to Rajneesh meditation centers around the world, Ma Anand Sheela announced: "A new religion has been born called Rajneeshism. A sannyasin can also be known as a Rajneeshi *[sic]*." The next month, *Orange Juice,* the tabloid of the Rajneesh meditation center in Berkeley, California, recorded this dialogue between Rajneesh official Ma Sushila and a group of sannyasins: "For years Bhagwan has said to us in India we are not a religion. . . . We are now officially a religion. [Lots of laughter.] [Somebody asked what the name is.] Guess. It's called Who Am I? No. It's called Rajneeshism. [More laughter.] And for those of us that happen to be sannyasins we are called Rajneeshees. You like that, huh?"

— *Oregon Magazine,* August 1984

NOTE: On September 30, 1985, 4,000 to 5,000 copies of *The Book of Rajneeshism* were burned in the Rajneeshpuram crematorium and Chandra Mohan Rajneesh announced the end of the religion of Rajneeshism.

CHECKPOINT CENTRAL OREGON:RAJNEESH'S POLICE STATE

The Rajneesh "peace" force arrests an opponent in Antelope

BILL DRIVER AND WIN McCORMACK

Approaching Rajneeshpuram is unlike entering any other American city. Visitors to the embattled mini-metropolis in the arid reaches of central Oregon find themselves subject to constant surveillance, the kind of security precautions normally associated in the United States only with military installations.

As you drive south from Antelope toward Rajneeshpuram, you pass four observation posts, each staffed by two members of the Rajneesh private security team. And that's before you enter Rajneeshpuram property. The posts, which provide excellent vantage points on the comings and goings on the highway, are located on private land owned by the Rajneeshees, as are seven additional posts located within the city limits of Rajneeshpuram.

The observation posts serve as the tentacles of an extensive, radio-linked security system outlined in confidential Rajneesh security manuals that were obtained by *Oregon Magazine* and confirmed by the monitoring of the Rajneesh radio system. The security system, which includes more than 150 officers, is intended to observe and record every movement along the only main road linking Rajneeshpuram with the outside world, alerting the Rajneesh command to the presence of anyone perceived as hostile to the group.

Rajneesh security patrol at target practice.

The manuals disclose that strangers are first announced as they pass through the town of Antelope, nineteen miles to the north of Rajneeshpuram. Antelope is itself patrolled by the Rajneesh Peace Force (police department) by day and by a private Rajneesh security force by night.

As automobiles pass the first Rajneesh observation post, located four miles from Rajneeshpuram, guards at the post record each vehicle's license plate and the number of passengers and assign a code to it. Code "Q1" is assigned to those strangers of "questionable intent" and is announced over the "blue" radio channel. "12-28s," those vehicles deemed "suspicious," are announced over the red channel. Says the manual: "Red is an emergency channel. . . . 'O' is always on red and sometimes monitors all channels." "O" appears to be the code name for control central.

A special section of the manuals entitled "Bad Guys" lists license plates that should be reported on the red channel. According to the manuals, government inspectors and investigators require special attention,

particularly Tom Casey of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. Codes for such government intruders are “9-20” and “9-21.”

Separate pages of the manuals, highlighted in blue and green ink, list special codes and procedures to be used if Casey is seen approaching the ranch. Casey has been investigating the Rajneeshees for more than two years for possible criminal violations of U.S. immigration laws.

At the bottom of one page is the warning: “Better wrong than sorry.”

Overall, the manuals give the distinct impression that the supposedly “open” city of Rajneeshpuram is not very open at all. The manuals state: “Only the Post Office, shops, and restaurants in the Mall and at Buddagosha . . . are open to the public without day passes or armbands.” The road to Rajneeshpuram’s city hall, open to the public on a limited basis during the day, becomes a private road at night, the manuals say.

In fact, most of the city of Rajneeshpuram and all of the unincorporated area of Rancho Rajneesh is private property, and in order to enter those areas visitors must consent to a thorough search. Instructions for such searches read: “Luggage and handbags need to be searched for matches, incense, candles, drugs, firearms, meat, fish, explosive devices, and ranch mail. . . . Ranch mail should be held here to be delivered to Nanak.”

Thinking of vacationing at the ranch hotel? Think twice. The manuals stipulate: “The hotel is open to the public twenty-four hours a day legally. So officially we can’t refuse anyone, sannyasin or not. But non-sannyasins try to discourage . . . say the road is dangerous in the dark, best to go to Madras.”

The Rajneesh security forces consist of ten full-time and thirty five part-time police officers. This Rajneesh Peace Force is sanctioned officially by the state of Oregon. The force works in cooperation with a 127-member private Rajneesh security force. These forces are now armed with a variety of weapons, including semiautomatic assault weapons such as CAR-15s and Uzi Model Bs, both of which can be easily converted into fully automatic machine guns.

Rajneesh spokespeople say both the Rajneesh Peace Force and the Rajneesh private security force operate in Antelope because they are needed to protect Rajneesh residents and their property from alleged threats of violence. The Rajneesh Peace Force has been operating in the town since the

Rajneesh-dominated Antelope City Council contracted with them for police protection late last fall.

Rajneeshees in private, commune-owned vehicles have patrolled in Antelope since the group first purchased property there in August 1981. From the beginning, pre-Rajneesh Antelopians have complained of the Rajneesh patrols watching them and their houses and photographing them.

Tension in the town between Rajneeshees and non-Rajneeshees escalated last year when former Mayor Margaret Hill and several other non-Rajneesh local residents traveled to Salem for a meeting with Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer. After the meeting, according to non-Rajneesh Antelope residents, the Rajneesh security patrol stationed a manned vehicle outside Hill's house almost twenty-four hours a day for three months.

On November 1, 1983, local resident Jim Opray picketed the Zorba the Buddha restaurant in Antelope for thirteen straight hours with a sign that read: "UNFAIR TO ANTELOPE RESIDENTS—PATROL CAR HARASSMENT." Chief Rajneesh attorney Swami Prem Niren threatened Opray with civil legal action. Three weeks after his threat, the Antelope City Council contracted with the Rajneeshpuram Peace Force to provide a one-person, twelve-hour-a-day patrol in Antelope. (The contract has since been amended to provide a two-man patrol.)

Opray frequently picketed in Antelope throughout the first six months of 1984, sometimes joined by other local residents. On June 16, four Rajneeshpuram city police officers entered Opray's house in Antelope and arrested him. The Oprays recall the officers claimed they had permission from county District Attorney Bernie Smith. They drove Opray to the county jail in The Dalles, seventy-five miles away, and charged him with "menacing."

District Attorney Smith says that the Rajneesh police had "no authority whatsoever to go into Opray's house." He dismissed the Rajneesh police's charge against Opray, calling it "ridiculous."

Pre-Rajneesh Antelopians complain of the sizable tax burden that the city council's contract with the Peace Force has imposed on a town with virtually no history of crime. (Total taxes in Antelope have tripled, to $35–40 per $1000 of assessed valuation, since the Rajneeshees took control of the city council.) Residents also say that the arrest of Opray is only the most blatant

example of how the Rajneesh police patrol in Antelope is used to intimidate them.

Says former Mayor Hill: “We live in a police state.”

—*Oregon Magazine,* September 1984

VALLEY OF DEATH?—THE RAJNEESH CULT TURNS TO ARMS

The arming of the cult raises the specter of Jonestown

WIN McCORMACK AND BILL DRIVER

"A lot of people are concerned about potential violence out there now. Four months ago, I didn't think it was a possibility. But now I do. If they continue to lose in the courts, which I'm sure they will, then we will have to be much more careful. They are getting very frustrated and will be getting more so."

The speaker is State Representative Wayne Fawbush, whose legislative district includes the city of Rajneeshpuram, a city under growing legal siege from a variety of quarters, including 1000 Friends of Oregon, the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC), the Wasco County Court and the Oregon court system, the federal Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the U.S. attorney for the district of Oregon, and the state attorney general.

The Rajneeshees now face the following real threats: the loss of the legal status of their city, which could result in a legal order to dismantle all or most of their buildings; the indictment and arrest of Rajneeshpuram residents, including top Rajneesh leaders, for criminal violations of U.S. immigration laws; and the possibility of the arrest and deportation of their revered leader, Bhagwan Shree ("Sir God") Rajneesh.

"They are," says Fawbush, "a bunch of people who have gambled and are in the process of losing. I am very concerned."

In an affidavit filed on July 3, 1984, in U.S. District Court in Portland, INS District Director Carl Houseman revealed that the INS "is presently conducting an ongoing investigation into suspected violations of immigration laws and related criminal statutes by the Rajneesh Foundation International and related organizations and/or their members." He also stated: "This investigation has now resulted in the preparation of an extensive investigative report which has been referred to the U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon for his consideration."

According to sources familiar with the INS investigation, the violations of immigration laws referred to in the affidavit involve alleged "marriages of convenience" at Rajneeshpuram between U.S. citizens and foreign nationals. The marriages are allegedly manufactured to help Rajneeshees from other countries gain entry into the United States or remain here in violation of U.S. immigration restrictions. Says one source close to the case: "They [the INS] expect to get indictments against twenty-five to thirty of them, including at least half a dozen top officials."

And despite its decision earlier this year—greeted with jubilation at Rajneeshpuram—to grant Rajneesh Chandra Mohan (the guru's real name) third-preference visa status as a "religious teacher," sources say that the INS has not abandoned its effort to deny him permanent-resident status. Perhaps taking a cue from the Shah of Iran, Rajneesh secured his original temporary visa at the American Consulate in Bombay by claiming that he needed specialized medical treatment in the United States for a back ailment. The INS would like to prove, as suggested by a January 1982 U.S. State Department report, that "Rajneesh either faked or, more likely, seriously exaggerated his alleged medical condition in order to transfer his ashram to the United States and escape tax difficulties in India." Predicts one source bluntly: "He will be deported."

Assistant U.S. Attorney for Oregon Bill Youngman confirms the possibility that he will present to a grand jury a criminal case against certain residents of Rajneeshpuram. Another official source involved in the investigation claims that if a grand jury is impaneled, the INS will not be the only federal law enforcement agency presenting evidence.

The land-use case against the city of Rajneeshpuram, originally filed by the environmental watchdog group 1000 Friends of Oregon has been kicked up and down the Oregon judicial ladder for almost three years now. But on

June 27, the Oregon Court of Appeals issued a clear opinion that, unless reversed by the Oregon Supreme Court, will essentially invalidate Rajneeshpuram's incorporation as a legal city. The court of appeals ruled that the Wasco County Court (commission) acted improperly when, on November 4, 1981, it granted residents of Rancho Rajneesh the right to hold an incorporation election on land zoned for exclusive farm use. Both 1000 Friends and the Wasco County Court have indicated they plan to move to force the dismantling of buildings at Rajneeshpuram.

"They played real hardball," says Henry Richmond, executive director of 1000 Friends, of the Rajneeshees. "They built as fast as they could, thinking that when the day came when their city was declared illegal, nobody would have the guts to make them take it down."

On July 11, in a move seen by many as the first step toward achieving dismantlement of the city, the Wasco County Court voted to remove Rajneeshpuram's Comprehensive Plan from the Wasco County Comprehensive Plan. Rajneeshpuram Mayor Swami Krishna Deva reacted to this action with belligerence.

"What I see here today," he told the commission, "is the beginning of civil war in this county. If that is what you want, fine."

Deva's statement to the Wasco County Court is not the only implied threat of violent resistance uttered by Rajneesh spokespeople recently. In an interview on KGW-TV aired June 29, Rajneesh Foundation President Ma Anand Sheela (Sheela Silverman) told how she would deal with any attempt to dismantle buildings at Rajneeshpuram.

"I will be dead," she said. "I will paint the bulldozers with my blood." Then, in a July 5 article in the *San Francisco Chronicle,* quotations from Silverman implied that she would block any attempt to arrest people at Rajneeshpuram for immigration or other legal violations.

"I mean business," Silverman said through (according to the *Chronicle* account) lips trembling with anger. "You will find out what will happen to you if you come here to harm me or Bhagwan or any of my people. . . . I'll take things as they come. We are willing to die for human freedom. I have 100 percent support from my people."

What worries people like Wayne Fawbush, as well as federal and local government authorities monitoring the situation at Rajneeshpuram, is that not only have the Rajneeshees been issuing these kinds of threats recently but,

over the past several months, they have apparently been acquiring the means to act upon them.

Since last February, according to numerous Oregon weapons dealers and local and federal investigators, the Rajneesh Peace Force and Rajneesh security force have acquired the following kinds of weapons: the CAR-15, a cheaper version of the AR-15, a semiautomatic version of the M-16 machine gun; the Uzi Model B, an Israeli made semiautomatic assault weapon, shorter than the AR-15, which is carried by the U.S. Secret Service; the Mini-14, a short, semiautomatic rifle; the Ruger 44 Magnum carbine; the MIA 308-caliber rifle, often referred to as a "sniper rifle"; the 357 Magnum revolver, a standard service revolver used by many police; and twelve-gauge shotguns.

The possession by Rajneeshees of at least thirty CAR-15s and Uzi Model Bs particularly worries investigators, who point out that the Portland police bureau has but fifteen such semiautomatic assault weapons. Both the CAR-15 and Uzi Model B can easily be converted into fully automatic machine guns.

"Those are assault weapons," says one investigator. "They are only used on very rare occasions by police forces even in large cities. You have to wonder, what are they really for?"

Although *Oregon Magazine* was unable to obtain precise information on the quantities of weapons purchased by the Rajneeshees, one investigator says they have purchased a "vast" amount of "223" ammunition—the standard load for U.S. military weapons since Vietnam.

"They have more 223 ammunition out there than all the other police departments in the state of Oregon combined," alleges the investigator. Another investigator alleges that the Rajneeshees "have enough ammo to supply a battalion for a year."

What will the Rajneeshees do with all the weapons and ammunition they are accumulating? Will they, as some observers are beginning to fear, deploy them against state and federal authorities in a variation on the mass cult suicide at Jonestown, Guyana, six years ago? Is this a real possibility? Listen to Antelope Mayor Ma Prem Karuna talking to the *San Francisco Examiner* (July 1, 1984): "At this stage, the battle may not be with guns and ammunition. But to be treated like human beings with equal rights, we have to fight every step of the way."

Or consider the words of Silverman in the official invitation to the June 30–July 6 Third Annual World Celebration at Rajneeshpuram this year: "We are being simultaneously attacked by all kinds of fascist forces. . . . As far as our community is concerned we are determined to protest, and protest our truth and our freedom with the very last drop of our blood."

Kathleen McLaughlin, a professor of religious studies at Lewis and Clark College, visited Rajneesh's former ashram while on a trip to the city of Pune (Poona), India, from 1977 to 1978 and studied his meditation and group-therapy techniques and his philosophy. She is also an expert on the cult phenomenon in general; as a result of her brother being in the Hare Krishna cult, she served on the board of directors of the Positive Action Center, Portland's leading cult-watching group. As far back as last year she was extremely alarmed by developing trends at Rajneesh's isolated central Oregon commune.

"I think there's the possibility that it could become more and more isolated and extremist in the same way that the Jim Jones community did," she said then. "The Jim Jones community had that kind of progression. As paranoia and isolation developed, people got crazier and began to consider extreme actions as normal or acceptable or as the only possibility. I don't mean to be inflammatory; I'm not predicting that. But all the conditions are there."

Ma Amrita Pritam, formerly Shannon Jo Ryan, is the daughter of Leo Ryan, the California congressman gunned down at Jonestown. A sannyasin living at Rajneeshpuram, Pritam was quoted in a January 10, 1981, *Los Angeles Times* article as telling a reporter, "I've heard other people say if Bhagwan asked them to kill themselves, they would do it. If Bhagwan asked them to kill someone else, they would do it." She added, "I don't know if my trust in him is that total," but "I would like it to be." Expert testimony presented at the 1980 trial of a Scandinavian sannyasin in London on drug-smuggling charges suggests that true believers in the divinity of Rajneesh will indeed "do anything"—including commit murder and suicide—that Rajneesh or his top assistants order them to do.

What is Rajneesh likely to ask his followers at Rajneeshpuram to do as the American judicial system inexorably closes in on him? When Rajneesh was in similar legal difficulties in India, he simply fled the country, taking his

possessions and his following with him. This time, however, for several reasons, the dynamics of his predicament appear to be quite different.

For one thing, Rajneesh proclaimed just before leaving India that he was entering the "ultimate stage" of his work, seemingly implying that he was going to make a final stand at his new commune in America. Secondly, Rajneesh is looked upon with disfavor in Europe and Australia, the only other locales where he has both followers and financial footholds. And thirdly, the Rajneesh focus on and fascination with death, long a theme in the cult's ideology, has recently become disturbingly more pronounced.

On May 7, for instance, in the midst of some fifteen minutes of rambling, disjointed testimony before the Wasco County Planning Commission, Silverman launched into the following pronouncement: "Death is the climax of life. Death is even more beautiful. The Church of Rajneeshism has special facilities to celebrate death. To dance death when death comes because death is just as important as life." When a sannyasin died during the Third Annual World Festival this summer, Rajneeshpuram Public Relations Director Ma Prem Isabel called death "the ultimate peak of life, the ultimate adventure." Silverman proclaimed that anyone who dies within a twenty-four-mile radius of Rajneeshpuram is guaranteed "automatic enlightenment."

Rajneesh himself once told his followers, "You have come to me. You have taken a dangerous step. It is a risk, because near me you can be lost forever. To come closer will mean death and cannot mean anything else."

— *Oregon Magazine,* September 1984

NOTE: It was learned, after Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh attempted to flee the country on October 28, 1985, to avoid being arrested on immigration fraud charges, that Rajneeshpuram security forces had planned to shoot any official sent to Rajneeshpuram to arrest him. In the end, however, it is clear that the real weapons of choice for the Rajneesh group in Oregon were powerful tranquilizers, deadly poisons, and dangerous bacteria and viruses.

THE WILL OF BHAGWAN: DRUGS AND PROSTITUTION

The Rajneesh cult's wealth derives from crime

WIN McCORMACK

What is the source of the Rajneesh cult's astonishing wealth? As Rajneeshees explain it, their money derives almost exclusively from sales of Rajneesh books and paraphernalia and from voluntary donations by wealthy followers.

But according to a scholarly journal and transcripts of criminal court proceedings, other sources exist that may have contributed significantly to Rajneesh riches.

In a 1980 article in an English psychology journal called *Energy and Character*, an ex-Rajneesh follower named David Boadella had this to say:

> At a well known religious community in the East . . . sannyasins are selling their bodies on the open market to secure the money to gain a home for their souls in the spiritual community. This may take the form of earnings from masturbation shows, or prostitution, and is tacitly encouraged by the community in question, where the immoral earnings are discreetly referred to as "getting sweets." . . . At the same community there is an official policy that actively discourages or even prohibits drug taking. Unofficially, however, an active drug run organized by sannyasins flourishes with or alongside the community, and people in need of money to buy a place in the community are put in touch with it covertly by high-ranking leaders there. Five or six kilos of cannabis are secreted in false-bottomed suitcases, and are smuggled by plane via Amsterdam and Paris to Montreal, where they are sold for £9,000 [approximately $20,000]. The drug ring collects £6,000 [approximately $13,000], and the person who smuggles the drugs collects £3,000 [approximately $6,500) toward his ticket to heaven. Several sannyasins are currently serving jail sentences for participating

in the drug run. Two of them used "brainwashing" as a defense at their trial, in order to get a reduced sentence."

The two sannyasins referred to by Boadella who used brainwashing as a defense at their trials were probably an English actress named Margot Gordon and a Swedish woman named Maria Kristina Koppel. Koppel was arrested at Heathrow Airport outside London in June 1979, carrying 3.46 kilograms of cannabis resin (hashish) in a false side of her suitcase. The hashish had a street value of about £5,000, or $11,000. Gordon was arrested at Charles de Gaulle Airport outside Paris later that year. In a similarly lined suitcase, she was carrying thirty two packets of cannabis weighing eleven pounds and worth £15,000, or $33,000, on the open market.

Koppel's trial took place in England, on September 14, 1979, before Judge J. Murchie. The prosecutor was Mr. C. Hilliard, and Koppel's defense attorney was a Mr. W. Taylor. Taylor introduced his case to the court with the following comments.

Taylor: "Today, there are a lot of people in court very worried about this woman, and the people behind her in India. My extensive inquiries show that the man out in Pune [Poona, India], called Bhagwan, is nothing short of an evil man, using a lot of young people—I am told some 50,000 to 60,000 people—and reducing their mentality to such a position that it becomes no more and no less than putty in his hands. He does it for money, and he uses these girls as a front for smuggling drugs all over the world. Over a period of time these young women, or young men, have their personalities reduced to nothing, their past is forgotten, and suggestions are put to them and they would do anything that this man tells them to do."

Taylor called as a witness an expert on Hinduism and Eastern religions who had done research on the Rajneesh cult, Professor Johannes Aagard. Professor Aagard gave the following testimony.

Aagard: "In Pune, Bhagwan and his people, not least his group of high-ranking officers, have established an alternative world. . . . Various young people are fascinated by this, as I myself was, and during the period of that fascination they are thrown into total obedience to Bhagwan. He gives them a mala with his own picture on it, and they get a piece of his hair, connecting

their reality with his. It is done very quickly but the result of this is done in two ways, through daily meditation during which he lectures two hours on a tape, and two hours in the evening, sitting in meditation and totally opening themselves and giving up anything but receiving. That is done each day, year in and year out. It is supplemented by the workshops, and there are eight or nine of them, and from the beginning the aim is to do away with the mind, the personality, the memory . . . you end up being nobody. You have to give up your ego. You have to empty yourself totally to be able to surrender to Bhagwan. 'Total surrender' are the key words. That is done by a series of humiliating acts where you are forced to do what you hate to do in a group. You lose that identity feeling which is connected with certain acts, certain reservations, certain sexual inhibitions. In a number of those workshops promiscuity takes place in the most rude and horrible ways. Male persons are allowed to do whatever they like with females, and vice versa, and it aims at bringing down the consciousness connected with the individual in order that a new consciousness connected with Bhagwan and his ideology can take place."

Taylor: "And what is left at the end of the day?"

Aagard: "The will of Bhagwan."

Aagard was cross-examined by Hilliard, the prosecutor, and then reexamined by Taylor.

Hilliard: "After a person has had this process administered to them, do they know what they are doing?"

Aagard: "I must say that they are observing as a witness, as a spectator, everything they are doing. What is acting is not them. They are only witnessing an action, and therefore you can murder, but you are not a murderer. You can steal, but you are not a thief."

Hilliard: "Does Bhagwan say who is a thief, and who is a murderer?"

Aagard: "It is the mind, and the mind is an illusion. Therefore the act of stealing and murdering is an illusion."

Taylor: "When somebody joins one of these sects they are given a name, are they not, an Indian name, and is it right that they are encouraged to kill—and I use that word advisedly—their old name, and all connections they had with their countries, parents, friends, everything?"

Aagard: "Yes, kill the other ego and the new one will come into existence, and even physical death is considered a possibility under

circumstances."

Taylor called to the stand Dr. Joan Gomez, a psychiatrist from the University of London who had examined Koppel, to support Aagard's testimony.

Taylor: "Do you think this young woman knew when she was asked to bring this cannabis into this country the difference between right and wrong?"

Gomez: "I do not know about right and wrong, but I am quite sure she did not know it was against the law. I am sure if Bhagwan said it was all right it was just like God saying it."

Taylor: "And did she have an alternative?"

Gomez: "I do not think it would have been possible for her to opt out at all. Even intellectually she could not, because the alternative was very horrible. She had to get money to go back to him. One way was prostitution and the other was cannabis."

Taylor pleaded with the court not to send his client to jail, saying, "That will kill her mind, and all she will do when she comes out is to go back to this sick and sad community." Saying, "I accept wholly the evidence I have heard," Judge Murchie gave Koppel a fifteen-month suspended sentence.

In the 1980 trial of Gordon in Paris, her lawyer, Philippe le Boulanger, argued similarly that his client had been coerced into smuggling cannabis out of India by the Rajneesh sect. He alleged that, in order to persuade her to carry the drugs, Gordon had been subjected to three sessions of two hours apiece in a "serenity tank" (a darkened, soundless sensory-deprivation tank filled with warm saltwater at body temperature) at the ashram, a treatment he described as "a Nazistyle torture designed to brainwash the victim." Gordon was given an eight-month jail sentence and an additional sixteen-month suspended sentence and was fined £10,000.

During the same period of time, the last six months of 1979, numerous sannyasins were arrested at European and Canadian airports for drug smuggling, including two other arrests at the Paris airport for cannabis smuggling and an arrest at Heathrow Airport in December 1979 for heroin smuggling. As far as *Oregon Magazine* knows, there have been no arrests of Rajneesh followers for involvement in international drug trafficking since then.

—*Oregon Magazine*, September 1984

TICKING TIME BOMB?

Is there an Oregon Jonestown in the making?

WIN McCORMACK

Almost six years ago, in November 1978, in the faraway jungles of Guyana, close to 1,000 followers of the Reverend Jim Jones died in what has come to be referred to as a "mass suicide."

Many of the Reverend Jones's followers willingly imbibed the Kool-Aid laced with cyanide that he proffered them that day at his heavily guarded jungle retreat. Others, however, were forced to down his poisonous brew at gunpoint. Still others, who refused to cooperate in his suicidal madness, were shot. The appalling carnage was memorialized in a famous *Newsweek* cover that showed the bodies of victims, some of them children, lying sprawled in front of the podium where the Reverend Jones had delivered his final sermon.

The 1978 Jonestown massacre has been relegated by most Americans to the category of a unique, isolated event, one so random and bizarre that it almost certainly cannot happen again. Some people, however, feel that a similar event can happen again, in one form or another, in any one of the extremist religious cults flourishing in the United States today.

One such person is San Diego psychologist Marvin Galper, whose practice includes dealing with former members of extremist cults. Galper has argued that every one of these cults holds the potential for another Guyana tragedy.

"In most of these cults," he has said, "there is a process of mass suggestibility whereby members become excessively dependent on a powerful leader, as was the case in Guyana."

While superficial characteristics of religious cults differ, Galper points out, most of them—unlike traditional religions—demand a totalistic commitment on the part of members and the sacrifice of any personal or family ties or loyalties that the members had prior to cult membership. They also demand total, absolute devotion and obedience to the cult leader.

By isolating members from the outside world and by making them completely dependent on the cult leader for interpreting reality, experts like Galper say, these extremist cults undermine both their members' emotional stability and their capacity for critical, rational thought and judgment. One expert has testified that at least half of the members of such cults suffer from "schizophrenia or borderline psychosis."

Dr. Arthur Janov, the originator of primal therapy, wrote an article shortly after Jonestown called "The Jonestown Syndrome," in which he compared the dependence of cult members on their leader to the dependent condition of children.

"The question is asked repeatedly about Jonestown," he wrote, "how something so humanitarian could end up as such baldly fascist control. The assumption is that Jones and the commune were normal and noble, then 'went crazy.' The problem with the assumption is that the surrender of self, of judgment, of feeling, had taken place long before the outward appearance of the cult became bizarre. The astonishing control demonstrated at the end was possible because, in any such follower-leader compact, one has already given up the self."

Richard Delgado, a professor of law at the University of California at Los Angeles, and Dr. Louis J. West, chairman of the UCLA department of psychiatry, put the matter somewhat differently in a joint article of their own written shortly after Jonestown. "The cult's characteristically rigid structure and its habitual deference to the leader as repository of all authority," they wrote, "leaves the members vulnerable to the consequences of incredible errors of judgment, institutional paranoia and deranged behavior by the cult's chief." Delgado further pointed out in a separate article that deranged cult behavior could take a homicidal as well as suicidal form.

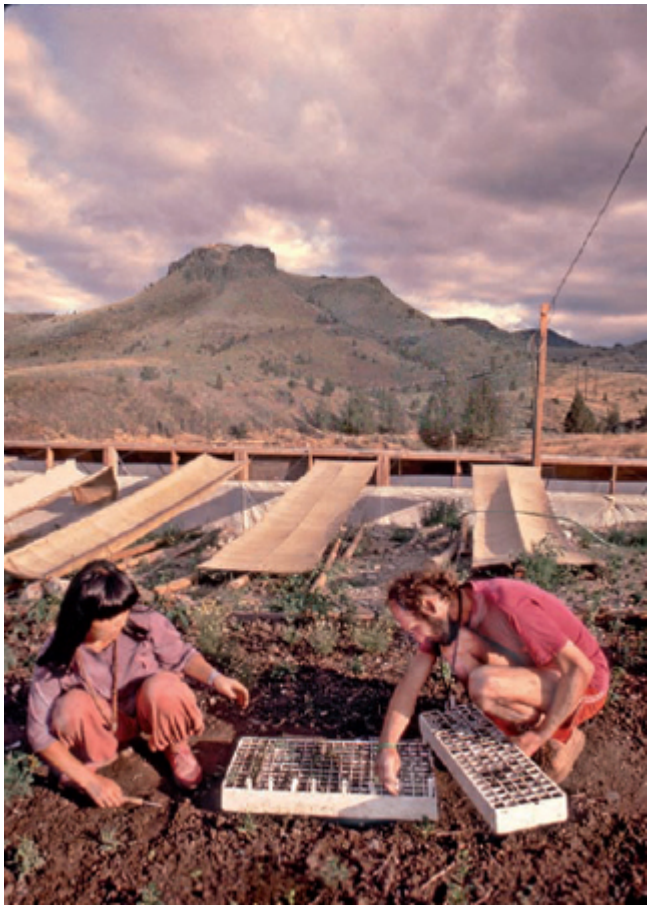
"Ex-cult members report that while in the group their state of induced obedience was so absolute that they would have willingly killed if commanded by their leaders to do so," he wrote in that report. "Some members have expressed the view that the struggle between good and evil

and the forces of God may soon break out into physical warfare; if it comes, they are prepared to fight and die as 'heavenly bullets' for their cause."

Marvin Galper calls extremist religious cults "ticking time bombs." It is time for Oregonians to ask themselves: Is there a ticking time bomb in our midst?

—*Oregon Magazine*, September 1984

Antelope citizens try to prevent a takeover of their town by disincorporating it, but their effort fails when newly registered Rajneeshee voters overwhelm them at the polls.



Rajneeshpuram is pitched as a self-contained, modest farming community, but it will quickly take shape as a full-blown urban complex.

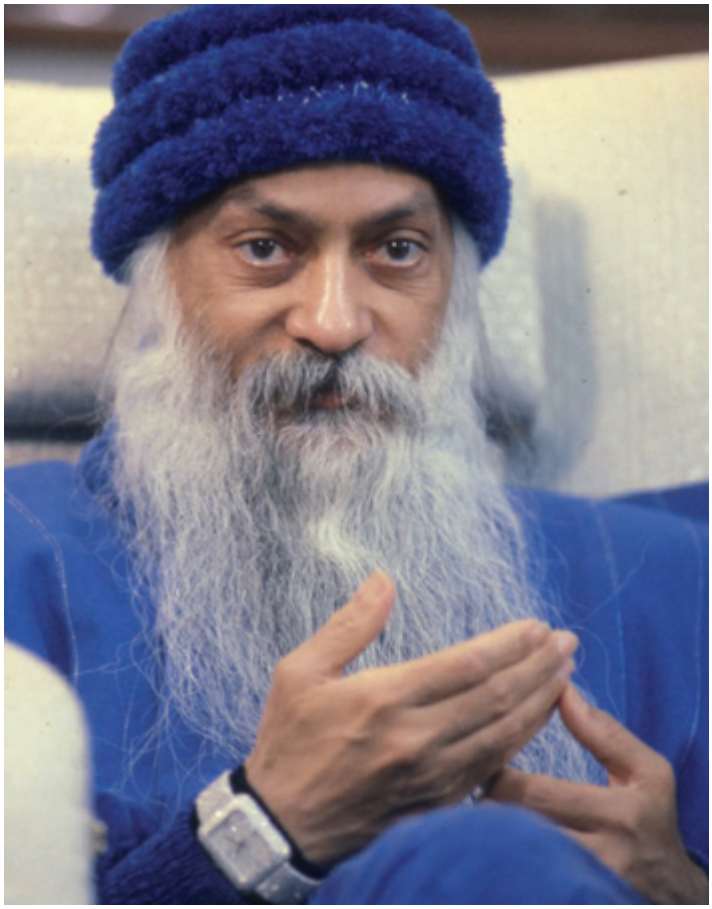
The Antelope Cafe, the center of the town's social life, comes under Rajneesh control. Soon, courtesy of a Rajneeshee-dominated city council, the town will have a nude park, an Adolph Hitler dump, and a red-clad "peace force" sporting pistols.

Soon there is a mall, a hotel, and a giant meeting hall called a “mandir” at the ranch. The use of the mandir as a meeting hall is in blatant violation of its land-use permit, which allowed only for a greenhouse.

Rajneesh's Rolls-Royce collection at the ranch will, by the end, total almost one hundred cars. It was thought by some in law enforcement that these "presents" to the guru were actually a means for laundering drug money.

Rajneesh's devoted "sannyasins" swarm the main road at Rajneeshpuram to greet their guru with cheers and flowers during his daily afternoon drive-by.

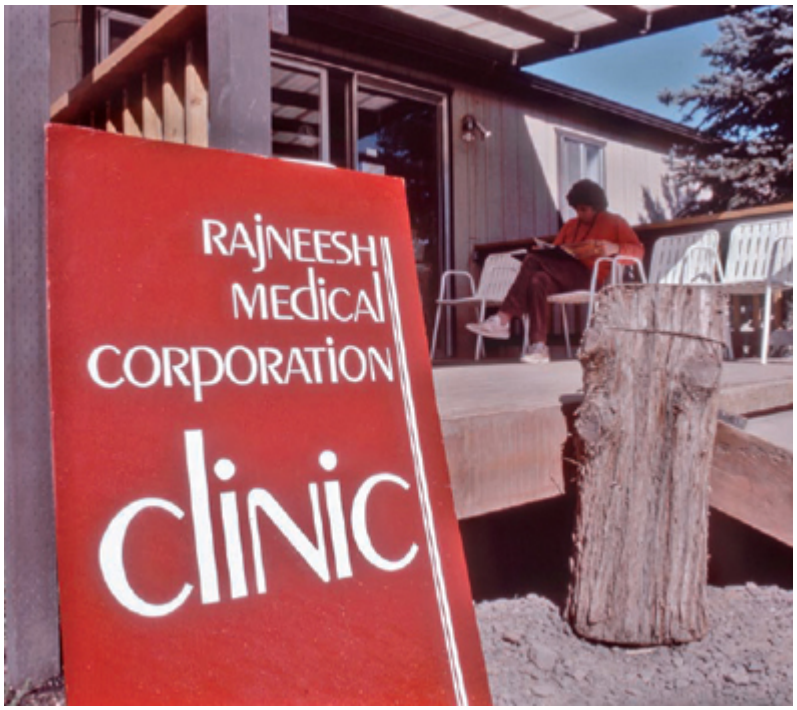
Swami Anand Teertha, the community's chief "therapist," at work. In Pune, Teertha developed encounter-group formats notorious for extreme violence that included rapes and beatings.



Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, wearing a characteristic sardonic smile.

The Bhagwan and an armed security detail. His security forces had a plan to surround him and start shooting if law-enforcement personnel came to the ranch to arrest him.

Sheela, on a worldwide junket after the failure of the scheme to take over Wasco County, responding to critics on Australian national TV.



The Rajneesh Medical Corporation, under the direction of Ma Anand Puja, cultured the bacteria used to poison restaurant patrons in the Dalles and two Wasco County commissioners and attempted to cultivate a live AIDS virus called “Moses Five.”

Street people enjoying themselves after arrival at the ranch. Later, if they refused to register to vote in the Wasco County election, they would be harassed and punished.

The Rajneeshees built a giant crematorium that could accommodate several thousand spectators, and the death of a sannyasin at the ranch was cause for celebration. If their stay in Oregon had ended, as some feared, in a simulacrum of Jonestown, this is probably where such a finale would have occurred.

Some of the extensive eavesdropping equipment found by investigators at the ranch. Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer called the Rajneeshees' system for bugging telephone calls and private conversations "the largest illegal wiretapping scheme in the history of the United States."

Ma Anand Sheela served twenty-nine months in a U.S. prison for immigration fraud, salmonella poisonings, and the attempted murder of Rajneesh's physician. A Swiss court later convicted her of involvement in the conspiracy to assassinate U.S. Attorney Charles Turner and sentenced her to time served.

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is arrested by federal agents in Charlotte, North Carolina, while trying to flee the United States to avoid a grand jury indictment. Back in Oregon, he pleads guilty to two charges of immigration fraud and is given a ten-year suspended sentence and orders to leave the country immediately.

BHAGWAN'S DEATH WISH

Rajneesh's obsession with death dates to early childhood

WIN McCORMACK

"In my childhood I loved to follow everybody very much. Whosoever died, I would be there. Even my parents became very afraid; they would say, Why do you go? We don't even know that man . . ."

"I would say, 'That is not the point. The man is not my concern. Death—it is such a beautiful phenomenon, and one of the most mysterious. One should not miss it.'"

That's how Rajneesh Chandra Mohan (aka Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh) describes himself as a young boy in India. In semiauto-biographical works such as *Dimensions Beyond the Known, The Awakened One,* and *The Sound of Running Water,* Rajneesh portrays himself as a person who, from a tender age, was so obsessed with the phenomenon of death that he would follow funeral processions during the day and haunt graveyards at night. Eckart Floether, an ex-disciple of Rajneesh who has spent several years studying and analyzing his former master's psychology, has—perhaps with some hyperbole— publicly characterized Rajneesh as a "necrophiliac."

According to accounts of his life, Rajneesh's morbid obsession commenced at the age of seven, with the death of his beloved grandfather. Here is how Rajneesh describes the profound effect his grandfather's death had on his psyche: "It was he with whom I had my deepest relationship. For me, he was the only love object, and because of his death perhaps, I have not been able to feel attached to anyone else much. . . . I could not establish a bond of relationship with anyone. Whenever my relationship with anyone

began to become intimate, that death stared at me. . . . Thus the madness of life did not affect me. Death stared at me before the thrust into life began."

In similar autobiographical passages, Rajneesh depicts himself not only as someone who died to others and the world at a very young age but also as someone who early on died to himself and his own body. He describes a persistent will to death throughout his childhood and adolescence, culminating in his "enlightenment" at the age of twenty-one, which he experienced as a radical disjoining of his physical body and his mind and spirit and, subjectively, as the "death" of that body.

"That day, for the first time," he says in his account of his achievement of satori, "I saw my body from the outside and since that day the mere physical existence of my body finished forever. . . . I have never been in the body again." Rajneesh has used his subjective sense of a complete estrangement between his body and mind to explain his alleged affliction by numerous ailments such as allergies, asthma, diabetes, and severe back pain.

Death, perhaps as much as sex, was a recurring theme in Rajneesh's discourses during his seven year stay in Pune (Poona), India. In those discourses, Rajneesh spoke frequently and eloquently of the beauty and attraction of death and of death as a goal for his disciples—calling it, for instance, "the very center of life," "the door to the divine," and "the beloved."

There have been deaths among Rajneesh's disciples. In the spring of 1976, a follower named Vipassana died in a Pune hospital, reportedly of a brain tumor. She was cremated at the ashram in an elaborate and joyful ceremony of singing and dancing. Rajneesh called her death "beautiful" and told his disciples: "The life [on earth] you have been thinking of as real life is not real life."

In January 1981 (six months before Rajneesh fled India), Prince Welf of Hanover, Germany, a "royal disciple" going by the Rajneesh name of Anand Vimalkirti, accidentally received a karate blow to his head during an ashram group exercise. He then "received enlightenment" five days later when he died of a cerebral hemorrhage (Welf apparently suffered from a mild case of the Hohenzollern genetic disease of hemophilia). He was quickly cremated in an ashram ceremony again marked by ecstatic singing and dancing. Rajneesh proclaimed: "I am happy with him, and many of you are getting ready in the same way."

Last summer, during the third Annual World Festival at Rajneeshpuram, a visiting sannyasin named Nirvesh died of an acute allergic reaction. His death was celebrated at the ranch with the usual joyous singing and dancing but without cremation. (The Rajneeshees have received permission from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to construct a crematorium that could accommodate several thousand spectators, but as yet have not built it.) A Rajneesh spokesperson announced that because Nirvesh died within a twenty-four-mile radius of Rajneeshpuram, "he has been guaranteed automatic enlightenment and will not have to be reincarnated."

In the spring of 1982, Hugh Milne (then Swami Shivamurti), Rajneesh's personal bodyguard for ten years, was so shaken by the apparent callous indifference of officials at Rajneeshpuram to the plight of a follower drowning in the John Day River that he left Rajneeshpuram and denounced Rajneesh and his community to the European press. Milne called Rajneeshpuram "a prison ruled by a malicious and ruthless despot."

It is often difficult, in analyzing Rajneesh's pronouncements on death, to distinguish when he is talking about the "death of the ego"— the condition of enlightenment he espouses for his disciples—and when he is talking about actual physical death. Some observers, however, fear that the two types of death may in the end come together for his disciples. Rajneesh has repeatedly defined the process of "sannyas" (the process of becoming a totally devoted disciple) in terms of "destruction," "disappearance," "death," and "suicide." In a typical passage, for instance, Rajneesh says that "sannyas and suicide are very similar. Suicide is a false sannyas, sannyas is a real suicide."

According to some ex-followers, a number of Rajneesh disciples in Pune were in fact driven by the excesses of ashram therapy groups to real suicides. After one such incident, according to an ex-follower, Rajneesh declared: "Suicide is a form of enlightenment."

Ex-disciple Floether, among others, has long feared that Rajneesh's preoccupation with and glorification of death will eventually combine with the growing siege mentality of Rajneeshpuram to produce a Jonestown-type finale in central Oregon. Floether sees two sides to the Rajneesh story: a drive for financial power and a drive toward extinction. He says it is an open question which side will prevail.

—*Oregon Magazine,* October 1984

RAJNEESH AND MONEY: BHAGWAN'S BOTTOM LINE I

Rajneesh's far-flung empire is more material than spiritual

WIN McCORMACK

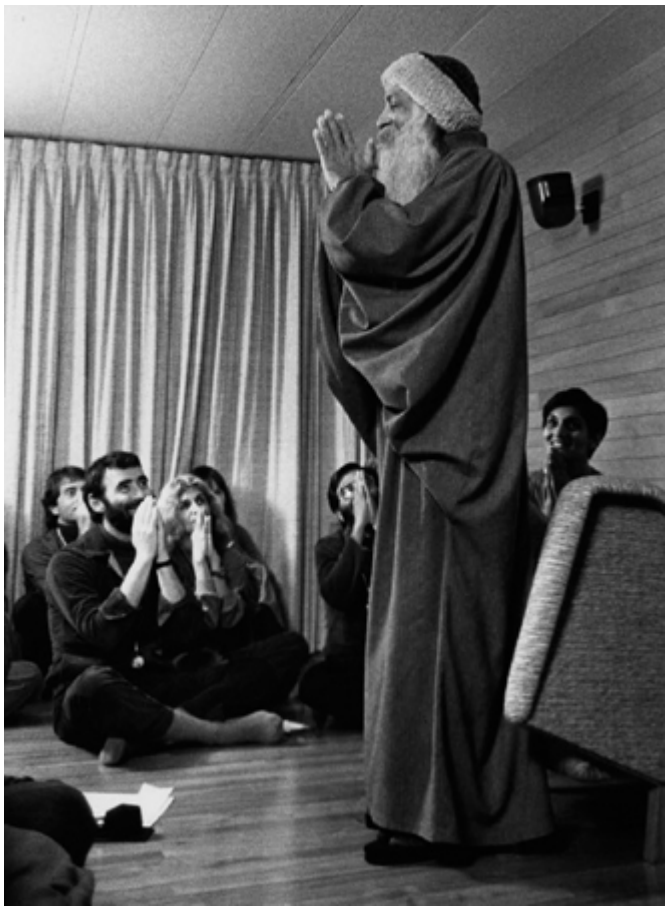
Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, who often has extolled the virtues of capitalism, is clearly a man who practices what he preaches.

His name does not appear on any known document of ownership of a single enterprise or piece of property anywhere in the world. But through top assistants like Sheela Silverman and her husband, John Shelfer, (whose names do appear on such documents), Rajneesh has developed a complex and lucrative international financial empire that belies his claim to be a purely spiritual leader oblivious to worldly affairs.

The heart of Rajneesh's financial empire is the Rajneesh Foundation International (RFI), an Oregon nonprofit corporation. According to its charter, RFI is "organized exclusively for charitable purposes and particularly for the spreading of the religious teachings and messages of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh." RFI is the successor to the Rajneesh Foundation in Pune (Poona), India, the city in which Rajneesh's community was located until he fled that country in June 1981 with Indian tax authorities on his heels.

The Rajneesh Foundation in India, whose tax-exempt status as a charitable institution had been revoked, was effectively disbanded when seven of its eleven officers resigned their positions just as they and Rajneesh were leaving for the United States. At the time of their departure, in the words of the highly respected Indian magazine *India Today* (June 15, 1981), the Rajneesh Foundation of India was "up to its neck in income-tax arrears, defalcations with the charities commissioner, a major insurance fraud, and a

string of cases for criminal offenses which were still being investigated when they left."



Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh with some of his most powerful officials, including Ma Anand Sheela.

The new foundation in Oregon, i.e., RFI, receives the monies from most of the Rajneesh organization's known sources of income in the United States: sales of Rajneesh books, audio and video tapes, films and paraphernalia; various therapy and meditation courses offered at Rajneeshpuram and other Rajneesh centers; profits from the annual World Festival held every summer at the ranch in Oregon; and donations from wealthy and nonwealthy followers. Although informed observers seriously doubt that these stated sources of income can, by themselves, fully account for the apparently unlimited nature of Rajneesh financial resources, they are quite sizable. It has been estimated that last summer's Third Annual World Festival at Rajneeshpuram netted upward of $10 million for the city and its various business enterprises.

Most residents of Rajneeshpuram are members of the Rajneesh Neo-Sannyas International Commune (RNSIC), an Oregon "cooperative corporation" whose stated purpose is "to be a religious community whose life is, in every respect, guided by the religious teachings of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and whose members live a communal life with a common treasury." The commune provides the workforce to run the ranch, build and maintain the city, and operate various Rajneesh businesses. Members of the commune not only work twelve hours a day, seven days a week, for no wages, but also actually have to pay a substantial fee for the privilege of being in the Bhagwan's Buddhafield and performing this act of "worship."

The fee for residing and working at Rajneeshpuram is said to range between $500 and $1,500 a month. Apparently, new recruits also pay an initial entrance fee that can range from $5,000 to $150,000, depending on the person's financial resources and work skills. Any money a commune member has left after paying these fees may be spent in the various high-priced boutiques, shops, and restaurants in Rajneeshpuram.

Because it is a cooperative, the commune is tax-exempt. Under Oregon and federal tax laws, members of a co-op are taxed on benefits they receive from their membership, but no income tax is levied on the organization itself. The RNSIC is said to operate at a loss. Even if it made a profit, tax experts say, the income it would pay out would be apportioned to so many members that actual taxes would be very low relative to those that would be owed by a single profit-making entity.

The "profit-making" arm of the Rajneesh corporate empire is the Rajneesh Investment Corporation (RIC), a wholly owned subsidiary of RFI. The investment corporation holds title to Rancho Rajneesh and the entire city of Rajneeshpuram, as well as to Rajneesh properties in Rajneesh (formerly Antelope) and Portland, and in turn leases these properties to the commune. These same properties are fully mortgaged to Rajneesh Services International Limited (RSI) in London, a registered English corporation whose principal function appears to be to transfer money from one component of the Rajneesh international financial empire to another. The RIC also may have various specialized holdings in an assortment of subsidiary trusts, such as the Modern Car Trust, which manages the Bhagwan's fleet of forty-plus "graced" Rolls-Royces.

Attorneys and accountants who have pondered the Rajneesh corporate octopus believe that the investment corporation, RIC, serves two different functions. First, they say, because it is a private corporation, RIC's records are not open to public inspection, unlike those of its parent corporation, RFI, which is a public foundation. Thus, the investment corporation may enable the Rajneeshees to keep details of certain financial transactions confidential, particularly some reportedly large transfers of cash from RSI in London.

Second, by mortgaging all of its real property holdings to a corporation in England, RIC may have made these assets invulnerable to court judgments against them in America. The sealing off of other special assets such as the Rolls-Royces in RIC controlled trusts would insulate those assets from court judgments as well, legal experts say. One Portland attorney thinks that the Rajneeshees have built "a nearly impregnable wall of protection for their assets."

These experts say that the legal function of the RFI, the center or head of this financial octopus, is obvious: by virtue of its being a nonprofit church, RFI does not have to pay taxes on its considerable income.

— *Oregon Magazine,* November 1984

RAJNEESH AND MONEY: BHAGWAN'S BOTTOM LINE II

The Rajneesh cult's wealth depends upon cheap labor

WIN McCORMACK

"Despite the monastic simplicity in which rank-and-file members live," Richard Delgado, a law professor at the University of California at Los Angeles, has written, "cults demonstrate great interest in amassing material wealth. Because new members are often required to donate all material possessions to the organization, each member potentially represents a sizable increase in the cult's treasury. Heirs and children believed to be likely future recipients of family wealth are especially cultivated and recruited.

"Apart from the resources they represent at the time of joining, each new recruit represents a valuable resource through his anticipated future income. . . . At the top levels, the leaders live in luxury, surrounded by servants, Persian carpets, antique furniture, and limousines. The obvious economic orientation of much cult activity renders the cult's religious claims vulnerable to charges of insincerity."

The claim of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh to be a religious leader unconcerned with worldly affairs seems, on its face, especially vulnerable to charges of insincerity. Rajneesh commands an intricate and highly lucrative worldwide financial empire. Two of the main pillars of this financial edifice are a complex corporate structure that is virtually immune from all forms of governmental taxation and a corps of fanatically devoted followers willing to fill his corporate coffers through donations of large amounts of cash and with the productivity of their own cheap labor.

From his earliest days as a cult leader, Rajneesh has shown a clear preference for the wealthy. Rajneesh officials have often bragged of the disproportionate number of millionaires (such as ex-disciple Pat Lear, heiress to the Learjet fortune) and extremely wealthy professionals among the Bhagwan's disciples. Rajneesh himself has put it pointedly: "That the materially poor can ever become spiritual is out and-out absurd." According to reports about Rajneesh's ashram in Pune (Poona), India, poor Indians who approached the entrance gate were unceremoniously turned back by Rajneesh's elite corps of karate-trained guards. Patrice Zerbib, a journalist for the French publication *Actuel,* once described the Pune ashram in the following terms: "It's very expensive to have a room at the ashram. The outward signs of wealth are fabulous: in front of the ashram are automobiles, motorcycles, etc. Rich people, no one works. It's difficult to keep up."

Apparently, it is also difficult to keep up at Rajneeshpuram. Many sannyasins aspiring to live and worship (work) at Rajneeshpuram reportedly must pay a hefty admission fee of $5,000 and up, and usually must also pay a monthly fee of $500 or more. Even then, according to ex-followers, the Rajneesh hierarchy may not be satisfied. One ex-follower reports attending a meeting at Rajneeshpuram at which Ma Anand Sheela cajoled and browbeat those present to contribute every last possible dime, from their own resources or from family or friends, to the Rajneesh treasury.

Rajneesh followers throughout the world "worship" for little or no remuneration. In Australia, according to *The Australian* magazine, Rajneesh disciples have toiled "sixteen hours a day, six days a week" to develop a network of Rajneesh businesses that includes a chain of Zorba the Buddha restaurants, a chain of Rajneesh hotels, and a national building company called Oregon Builders and Renovations. In West Germany, according to the Associated Press, Rajneeshees operate a highly successful string of discotheques (estimated annual turnover: $1.1 million). According to the AP, German officials are concerned that Rajneeshees are being exploited by having to work long hours in the discos for "pocket change."

At Rajneeshpuram, followers generally "worship" twelve hours a day, seven days a week. They are provided with room and vegetarian board and one set of red-colored clothing. Their "room" often consists of a small space in a crowded trailer with six to twelve other residents and little or no privacy. Meanwhile, according to ex-followers, the living quarters of top

Rajneesh officials are spacious and luxuriously appointed. Rajneesh himself resides in a mini-oasis compound, complete with private swimming pool, in a secluded section of the ranch. Adrian Greek, the leading cult expert in Oregon, has characterized "Rajneeshism" as a "slave system with an aristocracy at the top that receives most of the benefits."

In some instances Rajneesh followers unable to "keep up" have—allegedly sometimes with the implicit sanction, if not encouragement, of Rajneesh officialdom—turned to crime. In Asia, followers of Rajneesh were notorious for their involvement in the prostitution trade. In the German city of Essen, according to the AP, local officials have accused the Rajneeshees of importing drugs and prostitution into their Ruhr district city. Here in America, there is evidence of involvement by Rajneesh followers in striptease, masturbation shows, and prostitution in San Francisco.

Before Rajneesh fled his deteriorating legal and political situation in India for the constitutional protections of the United States, there was a rash of arrests of his disciples for international drug smuggling at European and Canadian airports. In two of these cases, in order to get reduced sentences the accused followers pleaded brainwashing by Rajneesh's cult. At one of these trials, a witness testified as follows about the moral atmosphere in Pune: "Good and evil, legal and illegal: that no longer has any meaning. . . . One does anything to stay in Pune: steal, swindle."

In the summer of 1983, three Indian followers of Rajneesh were arrested by the Bombay police and charged with attempting to smuggle hundreds of thousands of American dollars from the Rajneesh Foundation in Pune into Rajneeshpuram. One of the three admitted that he and a number of other sannyasins had also smuggled sizable amounts of foreign exchange purchased on the Indian black market to Rajneesh contacts in America.

A writer for the *Illustrated Weekly* of India once asked the following question about Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh: "So what *is* he—a con man or a saint? More likely," he answered his own question, "he is neither. More likely he is a crafty businessman who recognizes a good thing when he sees it—the good thing being gullibility."

—*Oregon Magazine,* December 1984

THE LAND-USE ISSUE: BHAGWAN'S LAW-STRETCHING I

The Rajneeshees' "simple farm" quickly became a city

BILL DRIVER AND WIN McCORMACK

"Things are going well in Chuang Tzu law-stretching department," reported the confidential minutes of a coordinators' meeting at Rajneeshpuram on November 14, 1982, apparently referring to the commune's department of construction. The minutes went on to itemize a number of structures the construction department had undertaken to build or renovate, including a greenhouse. The greenhouse referred to is a prime sore point with those, like the environmentalist watchdog group 1000 Friends of Oregon, who contend that the incorporation of the city of Rajneeshpuram is a blatant violation of Oregon's land-use laws, which were designed in 1973 to preserve the state's agricultural resource lands by concentrating urban development around existing urban areas.

In the original application for building inspections to the Oregon Department of Commerce, a Rajneesh representative swore, under penalty of perjury, that the 2.2-acre, 80,000-square-foot steel greenhouse structure "would not be used for a purpose other than growing plants" and "would not be a place used by the public." Nevertheless, after building that greenhouse, the Rajneeshees said they discovered that it had a "serious design flaw" ("less than ideal solar configuration") and transformed it into the commune's principal public meeting hall. Brent Lake, the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) field representative in Bend, has said that the greenhouse, now called Rajneesh Mandir, sits on some of the best agricultural land on the former Big Muddy Ranch.

When they first arrived on the Big Muddy Ranch in July 1981, the Rajneeshees proclaimed their intention to operate a "simple farm" and "religious commune" with a mere fifty "agricultural workers." Within a month, however, they had applied to Wasco County for permits to locate thirty four trailers on the Wasco County portion of the property. The permits granted allowed five inhabitants per trailer, giving the Rajneeshees a potential population in Wasco County of 170 people. Oregon law requires a minimum population of 150 in an area to incorporate a city. Two months later, in October 1981, the Rajneeshees applied to the Wasco County Court (title of the county commission) for permission to hold an incorporation election on the renamed Rancho Rajneesh.

The county executive of the three-member commission at the time was Rick Cantrell, a Wasco County cattleman who was in hock to the local branch of the U.S. National Bank of Oregon to the tune of $17,500. Cantrell recently had attempted, unsuccessfully, to borrow money from a fellow commissioner to pay off the note, which was coming due on November 1.

According to later testimony before the Oregon State Ethics Commission, events unfolded as follows. On October 4, Cantrell dined at Rancho Rajneesh and discussed with his hosts the type of cattle they should purchase for their commune. On October 7, Rajneesh representatives made their first inquiries to Wasco County about the possibility of incorporating a city on their property. On October 13, Cantrell sent a letter to John Shelfer (later Swami Jayananda), husband of Sheela Silverman and president of the Rajneesh Investment Corporation, offering to sell the Rajneeshees some of his cattle. The next day, October 14, the Rajneeshees filed an official petition for incorporation with the Wasco County Court. A hearing on the matter was set for November 4.

On October 25, Shelfer and Bob Harvey, a non-Rajneeshee who was ranch foreman at the time, went to Cantrell's spread south of The Dalles to negotiate a cattle deal. Harvey said later that Shelfer gave him the following instructions: "Pay him [Cantrell] whatever he wants and be nice: we need him." Shelfer and Harvey reached an oral agreement with Cantrell to buy about fifty head of cattle for approximately $17,000. Harvey later said this price was at least $5,000 more than the cattle were actually worth. On November 4, 1981, the Wasco County Court voted two to one to approve the

Rajneeshees' petition for incorporation. Cantrell was one of the two commissioners voting in favor of the petition.

The Rajneeshees' cattle deal with Cantrell, though agreed upon before the commission's action, was not consummated until after. The Rajneeshees did not take delivery of Cantrell's cattle until November 9, five days after the vote. They did not pay Cantrell for the cattle until November 15, when, according to the Ethics Commission records, they gave Cantrell a check for $17,540, made out jointly to Cantrell and the U.S. National Bank of Oregon. (The Oregon State Ethics Commission found "insufficient evidence" of a conflict of interest violation.)

"Findings of Fact" introduced by Rajneesh attorneys before the Wasco County Court asserted that "the uses to be established within the proposed city are of a rural nature . . . to meet the needs of the predominantly agricultural work force residing within the area. Limited commercial and industrial uses will be of a similar rural nature." It was principally on the basis of these findings of fact, according to Cantrell, that he, along with fellow commissioner Virgil Ellett, voted to allow the Rajneeshpuram incorporation election on May 18, 1982. Since the introduction of those findings of fact, and the commission's vote, the Rajneeshees have constructed, among other buildings, several hundred houses, several multiplex apartment complexes, a two-story shopping mall, a 21,900-square-foot "counseling complex," a series of office buildings and restaurants, a large warehouse, a four-story hotel, a factory, an airport landing strip that can accommodate jet airplanes, and their 2.2-acre, 80,000-square-foot public meeting hall.

During the next year, laboring under the cloud of the lawsuit against the incorporation filed by 1000 Friends of Oregon and of two explicit warnings from Circuit Court Judge John Jelderks that they were "building at your own risk"—and that, if the city's legal status were ultimately declared invalid, its urban-type structures might have to be torn down—the Rajneeshees built at a furious pace. Then, on March 2, 1983, the Oregon Court of Appeals, reversing a Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) ruling of a year earlier, declared that the incorporation of a new city in Oregon was a land-use issue. The court ordered LUBA to make a determination as to whether Oregon land-use laws were properly adhered to when the Wasco County Court voted to

allow an incorporation election at Rancho Rajneesh. That July, the LCDC promulgated an administrative rule setting out for LUBA how to apply its goals in such a circumstance.

Suddenly, the Rajneeshpuram City Council met on an August Sunday, and, in apparent violation of an LCDC rule mandating consultation with other government agencies before a city annexes property, unilaterally voted to annex 119 acres of land designated exclusively for farm use. On September 26, LUBA held in a preliminary ruling that the Wasco County Court did not in fact correctly follow Oregon land-use laws when it approved Rajneeshpuram's incorporation. LUBA's ruling, after review by LCDC, became final on September 30. Armed with the ruling, 1000 Friends of Oregon immediately requested a court order from Judge Jelderks halting any further construction at Rajneeshpuram. Jelderks, however, did not rule on the motion until October 24.

Between August 1 and September 26, the city of Rajneeshpuram issued a total of thirty-four building permits for urban-type structures. In the four day period between September 26, the date of LUBA's preliminary ruling, and September 30, when the ruling became final, the city issued an additional forty-five building permits for such structures. Between September 30 and October 24, it issued another forty-three building permits for urban structures. Many of these permits were for structures in the questionably annexed area. On October 24, Judge Jelderks handed down an order prohibiting Rajneeshpuram from issuing any more building permits and giving all decision-making power over land use at Rajneeshpuram back to Wasco County. However, he allowed all 122 permits issued by Rajneeshpuram since August 1 to remain in effect.

In March 1984, LUBA, responding to an appeal from 1000 Friends and Wasco County, held Rajneeshpuram's annexation of the 119 acres to be illegal. Judge Jelderks, again prompted by 1000 Friends, followed up LUBA's ruling with an order that, while allowing buildings already under construction to be completed, prohibited any further construction on the annexed property. In June 1984, the full Oregon Court of Appeals, reversing a decision made three months earlier on the incorporation question by its own three-judge panel, upheld LUBA's ruling on that issue. In a separate decision it also upheld LUBA's decision on the annexation. The court sent the incorporation issue back to Wasco County for reconsideration.

Three months later, in September 1984, the Share-A-Home program of the newly created Rajneesh Humanity Trust began importing homeless street people into Rajneeshpuram in what many observers assumed to be an attempt to increase voter registrations at Rajneeshpuram before the November general election. Two of the three seats on the Wasco County Court were up for reelection. But by the time election day arrived, any Rajneesh campaign strategies were apparently abandoned.

The question of whether Oregon's land-use laws really do apply to the incorporation of new cities, as well as the question of the validity of Rajneeshpuram's annexation of 119 acres of exclusive farm-use land, is, at this writing, before the Oregon Supreme Court. If the supreme court upholds the court of appeals on the incorporation issue, the Wasco County Court will finally have to determine how Oregon land-use laws should be applied to the specific case of Rajneeshpuram.

Meanwhile, Wasco County discovered in fall 1984 that 90 percent of Rajneesh Mandir, the former greenhouse, is on annexed land. The Rajneeshees have applied to Wasco County to designate the structure a "church." Oregon land-use laws permit churches on agriculturally zoned property.

—*Oregon Magazine,* February 1985

(Right) Rajneesh officials established separate “security forces” to guard the Bhagwan, and armed them with semiautomatic assault weapons. In the photo opposite, an Oregon state police official has actually come to the ranch to train members of the security forces in how to use these weapons.

THE LAND-USE ISSUE: BHAGWAN'S LAW-STRETCHING II

Did the incorporation of Rajneeshpuram violate Oregon law?

WIN McCORMACK AND BILL DRIVER

Sometime in 1985, the Oregon Supreme Court will rule on a question that has been vexing the Oregon judicial system for three years: How do Oregon's land-use laws apply to the incorporation of new cities? The question has already been the subject of numerous lower-court decisions —some of them diametrically opposed to one another—since 1000 Friends of Oregon and local ranchers filed suit in December 1981 in an attempt to nullify a decision the Wasco County Court (title of the county commission) had made a month earlier to allow an incorporation election at Rajneeshpuram.

1000 Friends has argued in its suit that the incorporation violates two of the Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission's (LCDC) principal statewide planning goals. Goal 3, the Agricultural Lands Goal, calls for the preservation of agricultural resource lands in the state. Goal 14, the Urbanization Goal, requires that urban development in the state take place in an orderly and efficient manner within an approved urban-growth boundary.

To complicate the issue, LCDC Goal 2 allows exceptions to Goals 3 and 14 (as well as to other statewide planning goals) in cases where it can be shown that an exception would advance the overall cause of sound land development. In meetings with Rajneesh representatives in the fall of 1981, staff attorneys of 1000 Friends told the Rajneeshees that, in order to qualify for municipal status, they would have to seek an exception under Goal 2. And

1000 Friends representatives said that such an exception would, in all likelihood, not be granted, because Oregon land-use laws already permit the kind of simple farming and religious activities the Rajneeshees say they want to pursue. The 1000 Friends attorneys told the Rajneeshees that they could obtain permits for farm-related structures on a case-by-case basis from Wasco County or Jefferson County.

According to 1000 Friends, the Rajneesh representatives responded that they did not want to seek an exception to LCDC Goals 3 and 14 because the process would be "too time consuming" and would not "leave options open." The Rajneeshees also reportedly claimed that it would be a "financial burden" for them to have to drive to The Dalles or Madras (the seats for Wasco and Jefferson counties) to obtain case-by case building permits.

Why did the Rajneeshees, despite admonitions from 1000 Friends, apparently go out of their way to avoid both the statewide and county exceptions processes by rushing to incorporate their own city? Perhaps because, contrary to their statements at the time, they never intended to operate a "simple farm" and "religious commune," but intended all along to construct a metropolis in the middle of central Oregon—whether it violated Oregon land-use laws or not.

Back in India in the late 1970s, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh described the utopian city he wanted to found. He said: "This will be the first Sannyasin city—a unique experiment. Ten thousand sannyasins will be there; in ten years, 100,000. It's going to be a beautiful journey."

Unable to acquire a large enough piece of property for his city in India because of opposition from the Indian government—based in large part on India's land-use laws, which are even more stringent than Oregon's—Rajneesh came to the United States. The minutes of a coordinators' meeting at Rajneeshpuram on November 14, 1982, clearly reiterate his objective. "He," say the minutes, "wants 10,000 positive people here which will multiply to 100,000." The same minutes refer to the city's department of construction and building permits, Chuang-Tzu, as its "law-stretching department."

The judicial confusion over Rajneeshpuram's incorporation has arisen in part because LCDC never before had to consider the incorporation of a new city, and Oregon land-use law does not directly address the problem. In July

1983, LCDC adopted an interpretive rule—which it made retroactive to August 1981—that stated for the first time that Goal 14, its urbanization goal, prohibits the incorporation of a city on agricultural land unless an exception is granted. The Rajneeshees argue that the rule is a blatant exercise of ex post facto law. LCDC and 1000 Friends contend that the rule merely clarifies what was implicit in the law all along.

The Rajneeshees plead that they met all the legal standards and requirements in effect at the time of the Wasco County Court's vote allowing for an incorporation election. Representatives of 1000 Friends retort that the county commission misunderstood the Rajneeshees' real intent, because it was led to believe by Rajneesh attorneys that "the new city is designed to meet only the needs of the agricultural workforce on the ranch" and that "the new city will not attract or support urban uses or densities." The land-use watchdog group suggests that a major urban development, with housing for up to 4,000 people, was not what the Wasco County Court expected when it voted to allow the incorporation election.

1000 Friends and other Rajneeshpuram land-use critics also take issue with the manner in which the Rajneeshees went about installing their highly sophisticated sewage and water system. They originally installed the system —which includes ten miles of ten-inch water main, ten miles of eight-inch water main, and a sewage and collection system with three lift stations and two sewage lagoons—on a permit from Wasco County for "temporary" facilities for their first World Festival gathering in the summer of 1982. Later that year, after the incorporation of Rajneeshpuram and the new city's adoption of a Comprehensive Land Use Plan, the status of the sewage system was changed from temporary to permanent.

In response to their critics, the Rajneeshees advance two seemingly contradictory arguments in defense of Rajneeshpuram's municipal status. On the one hand, they argue that the soil on the former Big Muddy Ranch is of such poor quality that it cannot be considered valuable land. On the other, they point to their admittedly impressive successes in reclaiming and cultivating the land as evidence that they have more than adequately addressed the concerns of LCDC's Goal 3, which calls for preserving agricultural resources.

Critics responding to those arguments say the poor soil quality is grounds for a land-use exception from Wasco and Jefferson counties for a particular

site, but not for the incorporation of a whole new city in the middle of central Oregon, where water is an extremely scarce resource. Critics also retort that the parts of the ranch under agricultural cultivation are perfectly acceptable under state land-use policies; the areas undergoing intensive urban development—some of which are allegedly on the ranch's best bottomland—are the ones in violation of land-use law.

The incorporation of Rajneeshpuram is of great concern to land-use authorities; if allowed to stand, it could open a dangerous loophole in the state's land-use policies. Although those policies severely restrict urban growth in agriculturally designated areas, they also give decisive preference to urban development over agricultural preservation within established urban growth boundaries. Stephen Janik, a land-use attorney in Portland who frequently represents developers, told the Portland City Club last May: "If this is allowed, clients of mine who are rapacious and want to develop an area could simply move 150 people in, get an urban growth boundary, and do whatever they wanted." He went on, "Are you presumptuous enough to walk out of this room, pick out a hundred acres of land, and decide you're going to put a city on it? That's what was done here."

— *Oregon Magazine,* March 1985

NOTE: The long awaited supreme court decision regarding the incorporation of Rajneeshpuram was finally announced on July 8. Although the court sided with the Rajneeshees on several key points, it ruled that LUBA had acted improperly when it refused to consider two issues raised by 1000 Friends of Oregon in their original lawsuit, filed in December 1981.

In challenging Wasco County's decision to allow an incorporation election at Rajneeshpuram, 1000 Friends argued that the county had not properly addressed the land-use goal designed to preserve agricultural land. The land-use group also argued that Commissioner Rick Cantrell's business dealings with the Rajneeshees prevented an impartial hearing on the incorporation.

The court's decision referred those questions back to LUBA, a move that pleased 1000 Friends' Executive Director Henry Richmond. "Many of us have felt that Rajneeshpuram was created as a result of the cattle deal involving Commissioner Cantrell," said Richmond. "Now it looks as though

the same cattle deal will result in a decision that the city is illegal. Perhaps there is a degree of poetic justice involved here."

On August 6, 1986, the Oregon Court of Appeals rejected the argument of 1000 Friends that the incorporation of a city on agricultural land necessarily violates state land-use laws, but ruled that the incorporation of Rajneeshpuram was invalid because of then Commissioner Cantrell's failure to disclose his business dealings with the Rajneeshees prior to the Wasco County Court's November 4, 1981, vote to allow the incorporation election.

BHAGWAN'S STRANGE EUGENICS

Rajneesh's childbirth policies mean no births at all

WIN McCORMACK

"Just as murder is considered by the society," Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh told the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in an interview in Portland on October 14, 1982, "so the birth of a child should be considered by the commune."

Although Rajneesh is well known for his sardonic humor and is often shown smiling in photographs, former disciples of his say he was not being facetious when he made this particular statement. They claim that Rajneesh suppresses childbearing in his community and that he and his assistants routinely encourage followers who become pregnant to undergo abortions. They also say that he and his assistants have encouraged numerous followers of childbearing age to undergo voluntary sterilization.

In a manuscript submitted to *Oregon Magazine,* former Rajneesh devotee Susan Harfouche describes the following experience she says occurred in 1982, while she was a member of the Rajneesh community in Los Angeles.

"I met a lovely girl," she writes, "my dearest friend, whom I shall never forget. She had come from where she was living in Germany, although actually she was from France. She came for the purpose of doing some groups at Geetam in California's Lucerne Valley. At the time Geetam was the largest Rajneesh center in the United States. The top group leaders from the ashram in Pune (Poona), India, resided there and held continuous group sessions. It was very expensive.

"She was intelligent, sensitive, and lovely. She told me that she was going to have a baby. I thought that was the greatest! She would make a wonderful

mother! And she wanted the baby, too! So did her boyfriend in Germany.

"As I said before, she came here to go to Geetam to do some groups. She only got as far as the first day. When the group leader Teertha [Swami Anand Teertha] found out she was pregnant, he not only refused to allow her to continue with the group, which she wanted to [do] very badly, but he also ordered her, in no uncertain terms, to leave Geetam and go somewhere for an abortion. She was not to return until she did this. And that is how she came to be at my house in Westwood. I was appalled! How could this be?

"We talked it over, she and I, pros and cons. But finally she told me that the group leader has the authority to speak on behalf of Bhagwan, and this is what the master wants her to do. I took the day off to go with her for the abortion. The waiting room was full that day, girls of all ages having abortions. My friend was the only one crying. She cried all day. It was a sad day. After one week, she returned to Geetam."

During a tour of Rajneeshpuram in June 1983, guide Ma Prem Veena was asked by *Oregon Magazine,* "What happens here when a woman gets pregnant?" Veena replied, "She gets an abortion."

And in a sworn statement to the INS dated January 7, 1982, Eckart Floether, a German ex-follower of Rajneesh who lived at his ashram in Pune in 1979, described his experiences:

"A former German air-hostess, Ma Sarjana, reported to me on August 2, 1979, that she will be sterilized in the ashram-owned health center. I asked her if she would be afraid of it. She answered no, she would not, and mentioned: 'Bhagwan has asked me to do so and I am happy, because this is total surrender. Yet, I am a little concerned, because lately during some sterilizations sannyasins were injured.' I asked what happened. Sarjana said that 'the bellies of some Sannyasins were blown up and thereby the colon was injured.' She concluded that she felt okay, 'because Bhagwan is with me and protecting me.'

"Ma Prem Jule," Eckart's affidavit continues, "a friend of mine, was pregnant in March 1979. She asked Arup [next in command in the Rajneesh hierarchy below Sheela Silverman] what she should do. The answer which Arup communicated was 'abort.' Jule got an address of a hospital which was under the direction of a sannyasin. On March 19, 1979, the abortion took place.

"After this I inquired if this was common practice and learned that it was. In a discussion with Ma Karuna [later mayor of Antelope], I learned that Rajneesh is of the opinion that only a few women are supposed to be ready to bear a child and become a mother. All the others are supposed to 'need their energy for their personal growth.'"

"In Pune, Bhagwan said in [a] lecture that a woman could not become enlightened if she had a child," explains another former disciple, "because it would take away from her vital energy. It took so much energy to become enlightened that if you had a child, you wouldn't have the energy to pursue that path.

"It was usually not a direct order," this former disciple says in an interview. "It was usually not, 'Go get sterilized.' It was more often simply an attitude, well known by disciples, that getting pregnant was unacceptable. What if you were a disciple and your master said that if you ever had a child, you wouldn't get enlightened? Most of the people—either consciously or subconsciously—are attracted to him [Rajneesh] because of this thing of 'getting enlightened.'"

This former disciple claims that after Rajneesh came to the United States in June 1981, sterilization became a "major issue" for female followers aspiring to live at the new commune in Oregon. "If you really wanted to go to Oregon and be with the master, your chances of going, I would say, were better if you were sterilized," the former disciple says. "There was always so much sex going on that you had a tremendous chance of getting pregnant. If you were sterilized, you wouldn't have to deal with the thing of 'What if I got pregnant?' because there was no room for that. If you get pregnant in Oregon, you're sent out of the ashram to deal with it yourself."

Roselyn Smith, an ex-disciple who lived at Rajneeshpuram in 1982, confirms this description of the antipregnancy sentiments reportedly widely held there. Smith recalls attending a meeting at Rajneeshpuram at which Ma Anand Sheela (Sheela Silverman) complained that too many sannyasins were becoming pregnant and having to leave the ranch for abortions, thereby interrupting their work on constructing the Bhagwan's city. She reportedly told followers to "get your birth-control trip together." Smith also recalls Sheela saying that followers who did get pregnant should go to California for abortions.

"The commune should decide how many children it wants," Rajneesh added in his 1982 testimony on this subject to the immigration service. "The commune should decide which parents should be allowed to have children. . . . The medical board of the commune should decide whether they will be able to give perfect children to the society."

Apparently few, if any, Rajneesh couples have measured up to these genetic standards so far. No former Rajneeshees interviewed by *Oregon Magazine* could recall a child being born within the Rajneesh community, and Rajneeshpuram spokesperson Ma Prem Sunshine refused to answer any questions about the community's birthrate. In addition, a check of hospital records in Redmond, Bend, The Dalles, and at a Portland hospital with a large maternity ward revealed no births to residents of Rajneeshpuram. The state health department was unable to produce any statistics about births at Rajneeshpuram.

— *Oregon Magazine,* April 1985

BHAGWAN'S CHILD REARING

Ex-residents of Rancho Rajneesh make some shocking allegations

WIN McCORMACK AND BILL DRIVER

"I'm a child-protective social worker," explains a former disciple of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, a woman who holds a BA in psychology and a master's in social work. She told *Oregon Magazine* a year and a half ago that "from a sociological point of view, in my opinion, there's a tremendous amount of child neglect going on there at Rajneeshpuram. The children are discouraged from living with their parents. They have one of the lowest priorities of any concern. They're given very little attention.

"Most of the twelve-, thirteen-, and fourteen-year-old girls at the ranch were having sexual relationships," the social worker also claimed. "It was a common thing."

Over the past year and a half, most of the sources consulted by *Oregon Magazine* on this subject have corroborated both the social worker's specific allegations and her general contentions about the upbringing of children at Rajneeshpuram. Some of the sources we consulted, however, have challenged her position and hold a favorable view of the condition of the children at Rajneesh's central Oregon commune.

Although many of our sources have made allegations about children in other Rajneesh communities, this article will be mainly confined to child rearing-practices at Rancho Rajneesh since July 1981, when the commune was established.

According to a 1983 report by the Concerned Christian Growth Ministries of Australia, an Australian visitor to Rancho Rajneesh in 1982 alleged: "The ranch house has been converted to the children's house and schoolroom.

Children do not have to live with their parents; they belong to the community, and pride is exuded in the 'modern' approach used in their upbringing. Some children were running around naked in the schoolhouse, and it is not unusual for boys and girls to sleep together. Children are encouraged to experiment sexually with one another, and one sannyasin said children often watch their parents' sexual involvement—'in private, of course.'"

A teenage girl who lived at Rajneeshpuram from the ages of eleven to thirteen said in an interview that her female contemporaries there frequently had sexual relationships with older men. She claimed she knew girls at the ranch as young as ten who had had sexual relationships with adult men. The girl also told us that children at the ranch had to work, "the same as adults." She claimed she knew one four-year-old who worked carrying messages around the ranch.

Allegations made to *Oregon Magazine* by street people who lived at Rajneeshpuram last fall during the Share-A-Home program are consistent with the statements of these other former commune residents. One street person said he saw children at the ranch "running around kissing and hugging. There wasn't anybody around. I thought they should be in school, but I always seen them on the street." Another said he saw Rajneesh children "feeling on each other, kissing on each other," and fondling each other's genital areas. He said: "They roam free, they can do what they want. . . . There was one thirteen-year-old girl that was going with a forty-five-year-old guy. He said he did [sexual] things with her with her parents right there. They call it 'open love.'"

Another street person interviewed by *Oregon Magazine* after he left Rajneeshpuram said he witnessed a boy and girl, three and four years old, with their genitals exposed, simulating sexual intercourse. He said the girl's mother was present while this was happening, and that she said: "It's OK, that's how you have fun." Still another street person claimed that he saw a man "sexually molesting" a ten-year-old girl on a crowded bus at Rancho Rajneesh.

"I didn't like what I seen," he said, "and the woman I was with [a Rajneeshee] didn't like it either. She finally went over there and told the girl to sit with us. Nobody else said a word."

Some sources have reported that they witnessed physical neglect of children at Rancho Rajneesh. Two adults who lived there said they saw

young children running around outdoors during the winter without adequate clothing. One said she saw a completely naked four-year-old girl playing outside in December. The other described the fate of a boy about two years old at the ranch:

"The first accident he had was when he fell down a stairway and really banged himself up badly. The next I can remember, he was run over by a pickup. The poor little thing, one side of his face was nothing but blood and pus and swollen and bruised. It was terrible. The only thing that saved him was the mud was so deep. He was out there amid the machinery all the time. It's a wonder he didn't get killed."

Former disciple Susan Harfouche has described in print ("Memoirs of an Ex-Sannyasin," *Oregon Magazine,* December 1983— reprinted on pages 98–112 of this book) a "little two-year-old baby I used to see wandering around the ranch by itself; bewildered big eyes, fingers in mouth, no smile, dirty, neglected."

A 1982 report by Fred Kaatz, then manager of agency licensing for the Oregon Children's Services Division, found the condition of children at Rancho Rajneesh to be far better than the above descriptions suggest. Kaatz (who according to his report spent "several hours" at the ranch, "mostly in the company of from one to five leaders of the commune") stated flatly: "I saw no evidence of what I considered abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children." Kaatz did learn that children as young as five were living apart from their parents at the ranch, but said in his report that this was by the children's own choice.

University of Oregon psychology professors Norman Sundberg and Richard Littman, who are conducting an ongoing study of children at Rajneeshpuram, provisionally have reached similar, positive conclusions. Littman and Sundberg, who have not yet published their findings, administered a well-accepted personality inventory test to children at the ranch. According to Littman, the results show the children to be "better adjusted" and to have a "higher sense of themselves morally and intellectually" than is average for other American children who have taken the test. He and Sundberg have formed "very favorable" personal impressions of the Rajneesh children's emotional and intellectual well-being. They have not attempted to gather any data concerning possible sexual involvement by children at the commune.

A mother who recently returned from the ranch told *Oregon Magazine* that she found her daughter, who has lived with her sannyasin father in Rajneesh's commune for seven years, in both India and Oregon, to be "really a very normal thirteen year old. She seemed vital, and definitely had her wits about her." However, the mother complained that her daughter's living quarters were off limits to her during her visit. She also said that her daughter, who was enrolled in the commune's School without Walls program, was working as a scheduler at one of Rajneeshpuram's restaurants while she was there.

In March, the Rajneesh School District temporarily lost its state basic school support when State Superintendent Verne Duncan concluded that the "school without walls" benefits a religious organization. The program, which involved students in hands-on learning at various corporations at Rancho Rajneesh, was abandoned after Duncan's ruling. Basic school support was reinstituted after the Rajneeshpuram School District decided to drop the hands-on learning program and resume traditional classroom teaching.

What is the truth about the treatment and condition of children at Rajneeshpuram? Commune officials have a stated policy of refusing to answer *Oregon Magazine*'s questions. But some clues might be found in Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's publicly expressed attitudes about children and child rearing in general.

Rajneesh has long opposed childbearing by his followers, arguing that children consume so much of their parents' energy that having them would impede his disciples' quest for enlightenment. As a result, followers who become pregnant routinely have abortions, and many reportedly have been sterilized (see "Bhagwan's Strange Eugenics"). Rajneesh's attitude toward children seems to pervade all his communities. Sally Belfrage, an English writer who studied at his ashram in Pune (Poona), India, wrote: "Children are considered so objectionable that you can hardly believe that everybody was once one."

Reportedly, most, if not all, of the approximately fifty children living at Rajneeshpuram (out of a fluctuating total population of about 2,000) were born before their parents became disciples of Rajneesh. Regarding such children, Rajneesh has said: "The children will not belong to the parents but to the commune. Once children no longer belong to people, they will be more human." His general child-rearing principle is "Leave the children alone,"

and he has suggested in lectures that the younger the age at which people become sexually knowledgeable, the sooner they will be able to overcome the sexual repressiveness of society.

In one discourse, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh waxed eloquent: "Let the children see, play, enjoy. While their parents are making love, let them be there. Let them be part of it, let them watch. . . . Let the children know. Let the children know many people loving. They will become more rich."

Jim Phillips, a father who filed suit in San Mateo County, California, in 1983 to prevent his ex-wife from taking their then nine-year-old son to live at Rancho Rajneesh, comes down on the harsh side of the debate about life for children there. The judge in the case initially ruled that the Rajneesh mother could take the boy to the ranch for a four-week trial period. At the end of the four weeks, the judge seemed inclined to extend the time limit of the boy's stay. After a private conference with the boy in his chambers about the boy's experiences in Oregon, however, the judge suddenly changed his mind and ruled that the child could not visit "any Rajneesh ashram or ranch or any place under the control of the Rajneesh Foundation" for longer than forty-eight hours at a time. The judge said in his ruling: "The lifestyle of the mother at the ranch is totally controlled by the Rajneesh group and is totally alien to the lifestyle of the minor when he is with his father."

Says Phillips: "I looked at the judge's face when he came out [from talking to his son], and I knew that he finally understood what's really going on up there at that ranch—that it's a kiddie-land for adults, and the children are getting screwed over."

—*Oregon Magazine,* May 1985

BHAGWAN'S DRUG RUNNERS I

Rajneesh followers have been involved in drug smuggling

WIN McCORMACK

"Bhagwan's disciples are under no pressure from our organization to smuggle drugs," protested Ma Yoga Laxmi, managing trustee of the Rajneesh Foundation in Pune (Poona), India, in a statement issued by the foundation's press office on February 24, 1980.

Laxmi, Sheela Silverman's predecessor as top executive assistant to Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, was reacting to evidence presented at several trials of Rajneesh disciples on drug-smuggling charges in France and England. The disciples charged at these trials were a twenty-two-year-old Swedish sannyasin named Kristina Koppel, arrested at Heathrow Airport, London, on June 22, 1979, in possession of hashish; Margot Gordon, twenty-four, and Judith Ashton, twenty-six, English sannyasins arrested at Rosy Airport, Paris, on September 24 and November 26, 1979, respectively, in possession of hashish; and English sannyasin Ann Kurland, twenty-five, arrested at Charles de Gaulle Airport outside Paris in November 1979, in possession of hashish. All four disciples were traveling from Bombay at the time of their arrests.

Defense lawyers for all four argued in court that their clients had been brainwashed at Rajneesh's ashram in Pune (120 miles southeast of Bombay) into carrying the drugs. All four defendants were convicted on drug related charges. Koppel received a suspended two-year jail sentence (for excerpts from her trial, see "The Will of Bhagwan: Drugs and Prostitution," pages 153–157). Gordon and Ashton received partially suspended jail sentences. In

Gordon's and Koppel's cases, the judges accepted the Rajneesh cult's psychological sway over the defendants as a mitigating circumstance. Gordon served eight months of a two-year sentence.

Ashton's lawyer, Edouard Knoll, told the court: "They brainwashed her in India. The aim was to totally take away her personality. They were ready to use any methods—seduction, violence."

The cumulative testimony at the four trials left it unclear as to whether Rajneesh or his official organization was directly involved in the drug trafficking. Although Gordon conceded at her trial in Paris that the Bhagwan himself did not order her to carry hashish, even the prosecutor in the case accepted that she was totally under the influence of Rajneesh's cult when she did so, according to the trial transcript. At her London trial, Koppel's attorney, William Taylor, blamed his client's criminal action directly on Rajneesh himself, calling him, "an evil man, [who] uses these girls as a front to smuggle drugs all over the world."

An article in the French magazine *L'Express,* commenting on Gordon's case, said: "It doesn't appear that the ashram directly organizes the traffic, but it hardly matters. The money will get back to them in one way or another, through donations, bequests, offerings, or the 'salaries' of [ashram] therapists. Utterly dependent, the disciples are ready to do anything to prevent the umbilical cord that ties them to the Master from being cut. Smuggling, swindling, prostitution: whatever is necessary."

Another English woman sannyasin, on her way from Bombay to Canada, was arrested at Heathrow Airport on December 30, 1979, in possession of heroin. Despite the urging of her parents, she refused to allow her lawyer to use her experiences at Rajneesh's Pune ashram as part of her defense. She was given an eighteen-month jail sentence.

There have been reports of apparent involvement by individual Rajneesh followers in the drug trade since the 1979–80 arrests. In July 1983, for instance, the Lewis County, Washington, sheriff's department arrested four individuals for operating a high-grade marijuana farm near the small town of Vader. All four were convicted of drug-related offenses. According to authorities, the woman who appeared to be the leader of the operation was a sannyasin. Rajneesh spokesperson Ma Prem Isabel emphatically denied any connection between the woman's activities and Rajneeshpuram.

In a document prepared for use by Gordon's Paris attorney, London psychiatrist Dr. Joan Gomez explained how an impressionable young woman like Gordon could have been influenced by the Rajneesh cult to become an international narcotics smuggler.

"Sannyasins attend courses consisting of group activities, all of which in one way or another tend to induce transmarginal, hypnoid states of hypersensitivity or suggestibility," she wrote. "Humming and swaying together in the darkness is the simplest; in another, in pairs, sannyasins ask each other, again and again, questions that have no answer; one exercise is to stare without blinking or swallowing for half an hour into the eyes of another; another is to remain for seven hours with a tennis ball on the navel; a three-day prayer group remaining in the Mecca position throughout; encounter groups in which gross violence has sometimes been reported; and the Tantra group in which each member must have intercourse with, say, fourteen others. The samadhi tank depends on sensory deprivation—suspended in saltwater in a tank in the darkness, a method used by the Nazis to push their victims to hallucinations and the borders of madness."

—*Oregon Magazine,* June 1985

BHAGWAN'S DRUG RUNNERS II

Rajneesh "therapy" groups led this disciple to crime

WIN McCORMACK

Kristina Koppel, a twenty-one-year-old Swedish woman, went to Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's ashram in Pune (Poona), India, in January 1979. She became ill with a bad cold, bacterial dysentery, and Giardia. In this weakened state, she underwent the initiation ceremony of sannyas, during which Rajneesh gave her the new name of Deva Albina, meaning "divine whiteness or purity."

In a document written on August 21, 1979, in preparation for her daughter's impending trial in London on drug-smuggling charges, Kristina's mother, Marie Koppel, commented: "The changing of her name was the first step into a new identity. The struggle to forget the past—Kristina—and to become Albina had started."

When she had sufficiently recovered from her multiple illnesses, Kristina began attending Rajneesh meditation and therapy groups at the ashram almost continuously. Her first group, which took place March 1–3, was, according to her mother, the "intensive enlightenment." In a letter to her mother (translated into English by her mother), Kristina describes the group: "You sit together, two and two. One says, 'Tell me who you are'; the other answers who she is for five minutes; then you change; and so it goes on, sixteen hours a day. It was terrible! All your fear and agony and difficulties you must suddenly face: and all the time you must tell it to the other person. Although telling it is somehow anonymously: actually you just tell it to yourself. The other person is just allowed to listen, not to react. At last you don't listen to the other person at all anymore, because you are fully preoccupied with

yourself. In the afternoon of the third day I couldn't tell anything anymore, but wept—and of course got sick [vomiting]."

From March 4 to March 10, according to her mother's account, Kristina attended the centering group at the ashram. In a letter to her mother around this time, Kristina, speaking of herself in the third person as she had been trained to do in the group, describes her emotional reaction to the "centering group": "For a while she felt tremendously high, nothing could depress her; then this changed and she felt tremendously chaotic, whenever something negative met her all of a sudden she felt very depressed and got a headache and anything like that: wherever something positive met her she felt free and glad as a lark. Somehow she tried to hold this feeling of happiness, did not want to come down to earth again—which had the result that suddenly she felt enormously depressed again. She felt low and afraid and lonely and far away from everything and everybody; as if she hung in the air looking upwards but not being able to get there, and not being able to come down to earth either, but hang there totally lonely and frightened in the air—frightened to fall down."

From March 11 to March 20, her mother recounts, Kristina took part in a Rajneesh meditation camp. March 27–29, she was in the "mysterium group," during which, according to her mother, she "came to accept reincarnation as a fact." Her mother comments that after the mysterium group, "the 'struggle' between Albina, who was happy, who saw God [Bhagwan], who lived 'here and now, without past, without future,"' and Kristina intensified. It was also soon after the mysterium group, her mother reports, that Kristina was approached by a German male sannyasin about carrying drugs to Canada.

From April 26 to April 29, Kristina participated in the "massage group." It was in this group, her mother relates, that Kristina first met the man called Sandesh (later identified at her trial as Robert Ericson), with whom she fell in love and who supplied her with the hashish she took to London.

In May, Kristina came down with a condition called sprue, whose symptoms are diarrhea, weight loss, and exhaustion. She wrote the Bhagwan asking what groups she should do now. The answer: first the "urja," then the "Tantra." Marie Koppel describes the urja group as follows: "The leader told them to say 'no' to everything from their past, to any human desire, to everything that used to mean something for them. To say 'yes' to anything that

came from Bhagwan. The participants in ecstasy throw themselves to the floor, crawling, kicking, shouting, 'No, no, no!'"

In the Tantra group, according to Marie Koppel, Kristina was commanded to have sexual intercourse with all the men in the group in turn, in order to "kill her ego." The group leader, a woman, reportedly shouted at her: "If you are to surrender totally to Bhagwan, you must surrender to anybody here, to any man although the mere thought of it makes you sick—you are not to think—just let it happen." Her mother comments: "Albina wanted to surrender. But Kristina was the stronger one. She refused. She beat and scratched the men who wanted her."

However, her mother's account goes on, after her refusal to participate in the Tantra group, Kristina felt herself a failure, grew depressed, and began contemplating suicide—"so that at last Albina might be reborn in a new purer life." Sandesh, by now her lover, chastised her, telling her she needed to have more confidence in the Bhagwan—and also in him, because he had been sent by the Bhagwan to help her. He suggested that she become a prostitute in Bombay—mentioning a luxury hotel where he knew she could procure clients—in order to kill her ego. Her mother comments: "Again Albina felt he was right; again Kristina refused."

As she was running low on money, Kristina then suggested returning home to Sweden for a while. Sandesh immediately assented, asking only that she carry a suitcase for him to a friend in London, which was en route. Kristina's mother comments: "The word *cannabis* was never mentioned, nor did they talk of money, but Kristina perfectly well understood what was in the suitcase." Marie Koppel also mentions that Kristina wrote a letter to the Bhagwan asking whether she should carry the suitcase to London. For that, her mother says, she was severely scolded by Ma Prem Arup, one of the Bhagwan's personal secretaries, who reportedly told her, "You are not to ask the master questions like that, only spiritual questions." The mother also reports that Arup told her daughter, "Go back to the West, raise money—legal or illegal—it does not matter. Return to the ashram."

According to her mother, an hour before Albina's plane left for London on June 21, 1979, Sandesh told her that she would be paid £1,000 on her arrival in London and £1,000 on her return to the ashram. Albina was arrested at the London airport the next day when one of her suitcases was found to contain thirty-two packets of hashish, weighing eleven pounds.

In an account of her experiences, dated August 29, 1979, a Sannyasin who appears to be Kristina Koppel says: "At the ashram, many disciples earn money by trafficking in drugs—it is common and everyone knows about it." She writes of reading one time in *Sannyas Magazine* about activities going on at the ashram, including "travels on private business." She explains: "Travels on private business signified above all trafficking in drugs.

"For my part," she goes on, "the fact that Sandesh trafficked in drugs was above criticism, was perfectly natural. Because, for a Sannyasin, everything is permitted: there is no law, only that of Bhagwan, and he permits all.

"We are gods—that is the opinion current among sannyasins at the ashram—whose heart, that is to say Bhagwan, is divine. We are superior beings, well above other human beings and their laws, regulations, inhibitions, and habits. Bhagwan is God and we are his angels, his priests, his servants, and his disciples. The disciples of God cannot be made to submit to any of the laws established for ordinary human beings.

"To attain our goal, everything is permitted."

—*Oregon Magazine,* July 1985

BHAGWAN'S POWER: THE HUMAN POTENTIAL MOVEMENT GONE AWRY

Evil outside the limits of the human imagination

WIN McCORMACK

"It's an amazing phenomenon," says Sarah T. (a pseudonym), a former disciple of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. She is referring to the movement she left a few years ago when she became exhausted and ill from overwork. "And I think people still don't get that what's happening up there [at Rajneeshpuram] is very, very powerful—more so than they're giving it credit for being, even at this point. Because every person who's a sannyasin, every person who's up there in Oregon—particularly now—is a very different kind of human being than you meet out here [in the secular world].

"They have extraordinary gifts as people. They have extraordinary personal power. They have extraordinary capabilities and abilities, because they've learned to go beyond all limits."

Sarah, a therapist whose professional discipline falls generally under the rubrics of the closely connected humanistic psychology and human potential movements, first became interested in Rajneesh when she read a book of his collected discourses called *The Book of Secrets*. In those discourses, originally delivered in Bombay in the early seventies, before the establishment of the ashram in Pune (Poona), India, Rajneesh drew parallels between the theories of the humanistic psychology and human potential movements and his interpretation of the Eastern sexual philosophy and practice of Tantra, which all share the theme of liberation from the emotional

and sexual repressiveness of society. Sarah says that after reading the book she was "gone—right away I started having mystical experiences."

"I had the feeling," she remembers, "that this is what I had been looking for my whole life. And that I had come to the end of my journey. That this was it. Reading the book was like having somebody express my innermost feelings."

The academic humanistic psychology movement, launched in 1961 by, among others, psychologist Abraham Maslow, sought to forge an alternative to the two dominant trends in contemporary psychology: Freudian psychoanalysis and behaviorism. Maslow believed that too much attention had been devoted in traditional psychology to pathological behavior, and not enough to healthy individuals who were able to "actualize themselves" and to attain and live from what he called "peak experiences." In 1962, the Esalen Institute was established in Big Sur, California, to offer experiential workshops designed to help people realize their "human potential" (the phrase comes originally from Aldous Huxley, an early ally and inspirer of Esalen). Human potential theorists, seeking ways to counteract what they saw as people's harsh psychological and social conditioning, found parallels among the emotional opening up process of Western cathartic psychotherapies, the peak experiences described and advocated by Maslow, and the altered states of consciousness produced by Eastern methods of meditation (and also by psychedelic drugs). The union of Western psychology and Eastern religion became one of the human potential movement's goals.

Rajneesh, in the words of one observer—social worker and cult expert Hilly Zeitlin—"picked up all the pieces of the human potential movement." Rajneesh's juxtaposition of avant-garde Western therapies, such as primal, gestalt, and encounter, with such classic Eastern meditations as kundalini yoga and zazen lured hundreds of thousands of Western disciples to his ashram in Pune in the 1970s. After reading *The Book of Secrets,* Sarah's next step was to attend a "Let-Go" weekend at a local Rajneesh center. The workshop involved participation in massages, therapy games, encounter groups, and meditations from 5:00 AM until midnight. The effect of the Let-Go weekend on Sarah was even more profound than her reaction to Rajneesh's written words had been.

"I stopped thinking," she says. "I was driving back home and there were all these twinkly little white lights on the windshield. I was seeing things. I

don't know even now what was going on." Not long afterward, Sarah was on a plane to Pune.

Rajneesh and his group leaders in Pune took the various cathartic therapy and meditation techniques associated with the human potential movement far beyond their usual limits of duration and intensity. Groups in which participants did deep, strenuous, yoga-style breathing exercises—exercises that can overoxygenate the brain and cause dizziness and nausea—would last for hours a day over several days. The ashram's therapy groups became notorious for episodes of emotional, physical, and sexual violence. Sarah reports that she suffered physical injuries, including two cracked ribs and a concussion, in an encounter-type group in Pune.

"You see," reflects Sarah in retrospect, "some people like to be on the edge. It's much more exciting than the monotony of everyday life. It's like a drug. It's a high. And you think that you're moving forward. These people really believe that this is Jesus Christ up there, OK? That is the beginning. And he's providing them with experiences, with situations that are taking them past anything they've experienced in their lives previously. There's a rush to that, that I've never found anything to equal. It's like playing a game of death—your death."

One of the criticisms of the human potential movement has been about its tendency to overemphasize the human potential for good and to underplay the evil, or dark side, of human nature. The word *evil* has also been used by observers to express their feelings about the motivations of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh.

In her 1983 book, *Miles from Nowhere, A Round-the-World Bicycle Adventure,* writer Barbara Savage describes her experience of visiting Rajneesh's ashram in Pune and hearing him denounce Mother Theresa, who had just been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her charitable ministrations to the poor of Calcutta. Rajneesh called her a " sexual pervert who gets her sexual satisfaction from touching lepers." Savage says that she stood up in the audience to protest Rajneesh's tirade against Mother Theresa, but that " one of Neesh's strongmen grabbed me and literally threw me back down on the floor. After that," she writes, "I was too frightened to move.

"I sat there and watched and listened to the man rave on," Savage continues, "and I was suddenly overwhelmed by a great sense of evil. I mean that. I truly felt as if I was surrounded by this massive evil force. I tell you,

Rajneesh was emanating evil. I was terrified beyond words. When the meeting was over, I fled."

Nathaniel Branden, a well-known humanistic psychologist in Los Angeles, had a similar reaction to some of Rajneesh's published discourses, particularly certain passages in *The Mustard Seed,* In an October 2, 1978, letter to a friend at Rajneesh's ashram, Branden wrote that Rajneesh "explains and justifies the slaughter of millions of Jews throughout history on the grounds that the Jews killed Jesus."

"Since I first began listening to Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's cassette tapes, and reading his books," Branden told his sannyasin friend, "I have been fascinated. Among all the Indian thinkers I have read, he strikes me as clearly the most brilliant. At the same time, almost from the beginning, I have had the growing feeling that this is a man who is deeply, deeply, deeply evil—evil on a scale that is almost outside the limits of the human imagination.

"The greater a man's brilliance, the greater number of truths he has insight to," Branden concluded, "the more dangerously destructive that man has the power to be—if his core is evil."

— *Oregon Magazine,* August 1985

BHAGWAN'S BIGGEST GAMBLE: THE ATTEMPTED TAKEOVER OF WASCO COUNTY

The Share-A-Home program was the beginning of the end

WIN McCORMACK

In early September 1984, the Rajneeshees began busing homeless street people from cities throughout the United States into Rajneeshpuram. Rajneesh public relations person Ma Prem Isabel announced the Share-A-Home program on September 6, claiming its purpose was charitable: "To share with some people who have been less fortunate than we have."

The idea of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and his followers harboring altruistic impulses toward the disadvantaged struck observers familiar with the group as unlikely. It also struck many street people as suspect. "It sounds too good to be true," Vincent Rowe, an eighteen-year old street person in Richmond, Virginia, told the Richmond *Times-Dispatch.* "How can you get something for nothing? They must want something." The Rajneeshees were offering free bus transportation to Rajneeshpuram, free room and board there with no work requirement, and free tickets home for those who didn't adjust to life in the Bhagwan's Buddhafield.

At the end of August 1984, approximately one week before the Share-A-Home program was officially launched, canvassers appeared in The Dalles seeking signatures to put the names of Mary Crawford and Donnie Barlow on the November 6 ballot as independent candidates for the Wasco County Court commissioners. The Toyota Land Cruiser used by the canvassers was found by The Dalles *Weekly Reminder* to be registered to an owner at Rajneeshpuram. Crawford's petition was subsequently rejected by the Wasco County clerk because it came up short of the required 512 valid signatures.

Barlow's petition, which did have enough valid signatures, including the signatures of 194 registered voters at Rajneeshpuram, was rejected because of alleged voter fraud. (Barlow was found to be simultaneously registered in The Dalles and at Rajneeshpuram under two different names.)

Voter registration for street people brought to the ranch under the guise of the Share-A-Home program.

On August 29, the three members of the Wasco County Court— County Executive William Hulse and commissioners Raymond Matthews and Virgil Ellett—went on an official inspection trip to Rajneeshpuram. They were stopped at the city entrance and told to proceed in a chauffeured Rajneesh vehicle. When they returned to their car they found that one of its tires was flat. The Rajneeshees offered to fix the tire for them.

While the commissioners waited for the tire to be repaired, a representative of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation brought them a pitcher of water and three glasses. It was a very hot day and all three drank water from the pitcher in their separate glasses. Hulse and Matthews, who in the past had been publicly critical of the Rajneeshees, became seriously ill soon

afterward; Ellett, who at the time was considered to be sympathetic to the Rajneesh cause, did not. Hulse had to be hospitalized and was told by doctors that he had an "extremely toxic" substance—later determined to be salmonella—in his bloodstream.

On September 10, shortly after the Share-A-Home program began, there was a large outbreak of salmonella poisoning in The Dalles. A second and larger outbreak commenced a week later. Although salmonella bacteria normally thrive in protein foods such as chicken, the outbreak struck patrons of salad bars in eight different restaurants in the city. Taken together, they constituted the largest single epidemic of salmonella poisoning in the history of the United States. All told, over seven hundred restaurant patrons fell ill and approximately forty-five were hospitalized. A baby born to a woman patron afflicted with salmonella came close to death as a result of contracting the illness in her mother's womb.

The Share-A-Home program itself—which reportedly cost in excess of $1 million—was a gigantic fiasco. Relations between the predominantly middle-and upper-class sannyasins and their lumpenproletariat guests soured almost at the start. On the night of Friday, September 21, Rajneesh leader Ma Anand Sheela held a mass meeting with the street people during which she upbraided them for actions ranging from putting their shoes in the toilets to poking the eyes out of Bhagwan posters. After the meeting, 225 street people flooded the bus depot in Madras.

"They were very discouraged," said Jackie Finley, the Trailways agent in Madras. "They said they thought they had been tricked. They just hated it." The next day, September 22, the Rajneeshees dropped their return-ticket guarantee for new arrivals. The Salvation Army stated that it spent upward of $100,000 to house, feed, and purchase return tickets for street people subsequently dumped by the Rajneeshees in Madras, The Dalles, and Bend.

Departing street people and journalists who penetrated the commune during this period painted a disturbing portrait of life in the Bhagwan's supposedly utopian community. "It's a peace and love thing, right? Wrong!" street person Duane Hartman told the Vancouver *Columbian.* "Everywhere you go, there's someone checking up on you." A street person from New York named Steve Maranville told the same paper, "I hated it. It was like a terrorist camp." Street person John Irwin told the Richmond *Times-Dispatch,* "There's rampant sex and they're trying to twist people's minds in these all

day brainwashing sessions." Irwin has alleged that he was kicked and beaten in his tent after refusing to register to vote.

Reporter Roddy Ray wrote in the *Detroit Free Press,* "Periodically, during dinner, a voice came over the loudspeaker: 'Attention, friends. If you are an American citizen and over eighteen, you are eligible to register to vote."' Some street people claimed that food, clothing, and bedding were withheld from them if they refused to register.

"It's a constructed environment that invokes most of the senses," Warren Barnes, from Berkeley, California, explained to the *Seattle Times.* "Color predominates. Image dominates—you see Bhagwan's picture all the time. Words predominate—Rajneesh, Rajneesh, Rajneesh." Barnes said that personal decisions such as where to work, where to eat, and where to live were taken away at Rajneeshpuram. "It's a continuing process where you can be a baby again," he said. "And these subliminal things weaken your will to resist."

In early 1984, the Rajneeshees had undertaken to arm both the official Rajneeshpuram Peace (police) Force and the ranch's private security force, as well as their "peace" patrol in Antelope, with semiautomatic assault weapons such as AR-15s, CAR-15s, and Uzi Model Bs; meanwhile, Rajneesh spokespeople such as Ma Anand Sheela had begun threatening to respond with armed violence to any attempts to enforce land-use or immigration laws against the city or its residents. In June 1984, Antelope resident Jim Opray, who had been picketing in Antelope to protest the Rajneesh police's harassment of non Rajneesh Antelope residents, was arrested in his own home by Rajneesh police on a charge—quickly rejected by the Wasco County district attorney—of "menacing." An article entitled "Rajneeshpuram: Valley of Death?" in the September 1984 issue of *Oregon Magazine*—which reached the newsstands just before the Share-A-Home program got under way—had raised the possibility of a Jonestown-type finale at the ranch. Now evidence began to emerge from the commune that the Rajneeshees might be planning to arm the imported street people as well.

"They say peace there, but there's guns everywhere you look," street person Donnie Harman of Tyler, Texas, told the *Seattle Times.* "They say no lies, but I was lied to until I left." Reporter Jay Maeder of the *Miami Herald* described Rajneeshpuram as "a dark-souled, us-against-them kingdom, full of beaming, soft-singing spiritual storm troopers whose high priests daily

drum into the acolytes that the world outside is a savage forest full of predators who mean to destroy them." Maranville described to The Dalles *Weekly Reminder* a meeting at which street people, particularly Vietnam veterans, were asked to "defend the community." "They said they'd arm people if they had to," Maranville claimed.

"These people are dedicated and dangerous," street person Michael Sprouse of Jacksonville, Florida, told the *Weekly Reminder.* "They are dedicated fanatics and they're armed . . . psyched up to the point of firing on American citizens or U.S. military personnel, if the Bhagwan asks them to. I know Oregon people are concerned. But I don't think they're taking them as seriously as they should."

In the end, the Rajneeshees' effort to register enough new voters in Wasco County to influence the results of the 1984 elections came to nothing. On October 10, voter registration in Wasco County was halted by County Clerk Sue Proffitt because of "the probability of voter fraud," and Secretary of State Norma Paulus stipulated that potential new voters desiring to register in the county would have to submit to a special hearings process in The Dalles. On October 18, the day after the cutoff date for Oregon's twenty-day residency requirement for voter registration, the Rajneeshees announced they were halting the importation of street people. They had delivered more than 3,000 voter registration cards to Proffitt's office by the cutoff deadline.

At the first voter registration hearing in The Dalles on October 23, only fourteen potential voters, out of a total of some two hundred present, were accepted. On October 26, Ma Deva Jayamala, the only Rajneeshee to publicly declare an intention to run for Wasco County Court commissioner, announced her withdrawal from the race. At the second voter registration hearing in The Dalles on November 1, no Rajneeshees or street people showed up. On November 6, only 249 residents of Rajneeshpuram voted, and almost none voted in county, state, or federal elections. By the end of 1984, almost all of the street people, whose numbers may have reached a high of around 3,500 in mid-October, were gone from Rancho Rajneesh.

At the end of October, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh broke his three-and-a-half-year "vow of silence" and began speaking publicly again—in a discourse on election eve, Rajneesh said that his coming to the United States in 1981 "might have been a mistake."

—*Oregon Magazine,* September 1985

BHAGWAN'S MEDICAL CORPORATION I

What are Rajneesh medical facilities really for?

WIN McCORMACK

"The number of medical personnel they have there [at Rajneeshpuram] is unusually large for a population their size," comments Dr. John Hochman, a Los Angeles psychiatrist who has researched and written about the dynamics of cults. "And they have applied to build a rather large hospital. This certainly invites speculation. Why do they have such great concern with health matters? Do they have health problems there we don't know about? Are they preparing for insurrection? Or is there some other reason for their apparently disproportionate concern with medical matters?

"They have a highly unusual preoccupation with AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome)," Hochman goes on. "And this is a group that has been associated with sexual promiscuity in the past. My feeling is, where there is smoke, there's usually fire."

The Rajneesh Medical Corporation currently operates a small clinic at Rajneeshpuram, reportedly equipped with a medical laboratory, pharmacy, X-ray machines, and two ambulances, and staffed by some twenty physicians, fifty nurses, and numerous paramedical personnel. It has filed three letters of intent with the state Health Planning and Development Agency to apply for a certificate of need to build a full-scale hospital. The latest letter of intent, filed in January, asserts the need for a twenty-seven bed facility. The Rajneeshees have not yet filed the actual application. They have one year from January in which to do so.

Neither the Rajneeshees' concern with health nor their desire to operate their own medical facility is new. In India, prior to coming to the United States, they ran a medical clinic removed from the main grounds of the Shree Rajneesh Ashram in Pune (Poona). There was also a private, independent hospital in Pune reportedly under the direction of a Rajneesh doctor-disciple. The ashram clinic and this hospital are said to have treated Rajneesh disciples for a variety of medical problems (such as hepatitis, dysentery, and tropical diseases common in India); injuries resulting from the physical and emotional violence that for a long time characterized Rajneesh therapy groups; venereal diseases that were prevalent at the ashram because of Rajneesh's policy of encouraging sexual freedom and group sex orgies; and unwanted pregnancies.

There have been no known births to Rajneeshpuram residents since the commune's inception in 1981. Rajneesh medical spokespersons say this is because of the lack of adequate obstetrical facilities at the ranch and have advanced a purported need for such facilities as one of the reasons why they require a full-scale hospital. Ex-disciples, however, have reported to *Oregon Magazine* that Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh discourages pregnancy and childbearing among his followers, and that this has resulted in numerous followers undergoing abortions and voluntary sterilizations, both in India and in the United States. In India, abortions reportedly were performed at the ashram's medical clinic, while sterilizations were carried out at the hospital under the control of the Rajneesh doctor.

Rajneesh physicians claim a virtual absence of chronic or infectious diseases at Rajneeshpuram. Former residents of the ranch, however, have told *Oregon Magazine* that there were outbreaks of hepatitis, amoebic infections, and venereal diseases there in the early days. Since 1982, Rajneesh doctors have screened new arrivals carefully, quarantining them sexually while they are tested for venereal and other diseases. Since the spring of 1984, physicians have operated a stringent anti-AIDS program at the ranch. That program began around March 1984, when the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh predicted that two-thirds of the world's population would die of AIDS within the next ten years. Commune residents, in contrast to previous Rajneesh policy, were now encouraged to be monogamous or even celibate. The Rajneesh Medical Corporation began issuing free condoms and latex rubber surgical gloves for use during sexual intercourse. In November 1984,

after the termination of the Share-A-Home program that recruited homeless people to Rajneeshpuram from all over the United States, the Rajneesh Medical Corporation stepped up its anti-AIDS effort, instructing residents to refrain from kissing and oral or anal intercourse. According to Dr. Leland Beamer of Mountain View Hospital in Madras, one of the street people who lived at Rajneeshpuram during the Share-A-Home program was treated at Mountain View Hospital for AIDS. And on September 4, the Rajneesh Medical Corporation announced that antibody tests had identified two Rajneeshpuram residents as carriers of a virus that has been linked to AIDS. The corporation now requires that the hands of customers at Rajneeshpuram restaurants be cleansed with alcohol prior to eating and suggests that residents spray toilet seats with alcohol before using them.

Rajneesh medical spokespersons also claim that the Rajneeshpuram community is completely free of hypertension and mental stress. In a talk at the University of Oregon Health Sciences Center on March 5, for example, Swami Prem Siddha, NW, a Rajneesh psychiatrist, asserted that "depression is almost nonexistent in our city" and called Rajneeshpuram "the only city in the world where people are really joyous."

Whatever the situation at Rajneeshpuram, accounts of life at Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's ashram in Pune have painted a radically different portrait of the mental condition of many sannyasins there. Ex-Rajneesh disciple Eckart Floether, for instance, has said, "In my opinion, what really happened at Rajneesh's ashram was . . . unskilled experimentation with human lives and mental states. The so called liberation of the person was often accompanied by disintegration of the personality. A number of people [sannyasins] have been found wandering the streets [of Pune], totally disoriented. They did not know who they were, where they were, or what they wanted." The Reverend John DeVries of Grand Rapids, Michigan, told the Salem *Statesman-Journal* last March after a visit to Pune: "The insane asylums [there] are still full of the wreckage of his disciples."

Beamer and other medical professionals wonder why, if the incidence of physical and mental problems at Rancho Rajneesh is as minimal as the Rajneeshees claim, the Rajneesh Medical Corporation would want as large a medical facility as it has proposed. Both Beamer and Don Nyberg, manager of the certificate-of-need program at the state Health Planning and Development Agency, pointed out that the population at Rajneeshpuram is

relatively young and one in which they would not expect to find a high incidence of serious illness. Nyberg stressed that the normal ratio of hospital beds to population in Oregon is two to four beds per thousand. If the regular population of Rajneeshpuram is, as is generally estimated, between 1,000 and 1,500, a twenty-seven bed hospital would give the Rajneeshees a ratio of hospital beds five to ten times lower than the state norm.

Nyberg also pointed out that Rajneesh doctors have visiting privileges at hospitals in Madras, Bend, and Redmond. Rajneeshees counter that these hospitals are too far away to provide adequate emergency services, particularly in winter, and note that the nearest full-service hospital is one hundred miles away in Bend. Rajneeshees also argue that the two-to-four-beds-per-thousand standard does not take into account the fact that the population of Rajneeshpuram increases as much as ten times during the annual summer world festivals.

Hochman, Beamer, Nyberg, and other medical professionals nevertheless are still perplexed by the Rajneesh Medical Corporation's letters of intent. "They haven't yet fully explained what complement of services they want or what they want them for," says Nyberg. "It's a mystery to us why they want this facility."

—*Oregon Magazine,* October 1985

The Rajneesh Medical Corporation Center is closed down in October 1985, after police find a biological-warfare laboratory and a shelf of books on ways to commit murder

BHAGWAN'S MEDICAL CORPORATION II

Rajneesh doctors are implicated in serious crimes, including attempted murder

WIN McCORMACK

In a series of startling revelations in September 1985, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh accused his former top executive assistant, Ma Anand Sheela, and other former commune leaders of attempting to poison Jefferson County District Attorney Michael Sullivan, attempting to poison Wasco County Court Commissioner William Hulse, drugging street people brought to Rajneeshpuram through the commune's Share-A-Home program, spreading salmonella in several restaurants in The Dalles, and attempting to poison the water supply of The Dalles.

What the Bhagwan did not reveal was the possible direct involvement of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation in some or all of these criminal activities, such as the alleged drugging of street people. William Henry Allen, the street person who died at Government Camp in late October 1984, was found to have suffered an overdose of Elavil (amitriptyline), a mood-altering drug for which he had been given a prescription by a doctor at Rajneeshpuram. Allen also had a quantity of the extremely powerful tranquilizer Haldol in his possession at the time of his death. The Rajneesh Medical Corporation ordered forty-eight bottles of Haldol at the onset of the Share-A-Home program.

James Brooks, a street person from Seattle, has alleged that he was given an injection by a medical worker at Rajneeshpuram that caused him to be hospitalized for psychiatric observation after leaving the ashram. An examination of Brooks at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle uncovered traces of the tranquilizer benzodiazepine in his blood.

In another incident possibly related to the Medical Corporation, Wasco County Court Commissioner William Hulse has testified before Congress that he became violently ill in August 1984 after drinking water at Rajneeshpuram. The water was provided to him by a representative of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation. Soon after leaving the commune, Hulse vas diagnosed as having an extremely toxic—and potentially lethal—substance in his bloodstream.

In a speech on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives in February 1985—a speech that first publicly raised the possibility that Rajneeshees had been involved in the unusual and widespread outbreak of salmonella food poisoning in The Dalles in mid-September 1984—Oregon Congressman Jim Weaver noted, "The Rajneesh Medical Corp. has a well equipped medical laboratory at Rajneeshpuram."

In addition to what has been alleged or admitted by the Bhagwan, *Oregon Magazine* has learned from sources at the Jefferson County Mental Health Department and the Mountain View Hospital in Madras that there were instances of Rajneesh followers themselves apparently being "involuntarily detained and drugged against their will" at Rancho Rajneesh prior to September. In one such incident, according to sources, a visiting sannyasin from Europe apparently was detained "without due process" and administered "large doses" of the psychotropic drug thorazine. The sannyasin was subsequently dropped off at Mountain View Hospital for psychiatric treatment.

Prem Hasya, successor to Ma Anand Sheela as Rajneesh's personal secretary, has alleged that Anand Puja, a licensed nurse and former secretary-treasurer of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation, miscoded the results of tests administered at Rajneeshpuram for AIDS-related antibodies in order to force Sheela's opponents into quarantine. The grandiose anti AIDS program that began at Rajneeshpuram in spring 1984 reportedly was the brainchild of Puja and Sheela. It also has been reported that the break between Sheela and the Bhagwan began when she attempted to establish an international-AIDS hospice in the town of Rajneesh (formerly Antelope).

Dr. Shunyo, a Rajneesh internist who used to practice at Mountain View Hospital, became the new head of the Medical Corporation after Sheela and Puja departed. Shunyo is also a state-appointed assistant medical examiner,

responsible for reporting to the state medical examiner's office on the causes of any deaths at Rancho Rajneesh.

According to investigative reports in the *Oregonian* of July 5 and July 18, Shunyo may have been involved in possible falsification of medical data to enable Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and his mother to enter and remain in the United States. *Oregon Magazine* has learned that Shunyo left the commune shortly after the September leadership shake-up. Asked why he was leaving, he reportedly said, "They tried to kill my best friend."

Rajneesh religious practice calls for the quick cremation of the bodies of dead sannyasins. In September, during the week the Bhagwan was making his accusations against Sheela and her cohort, the Rajneeshees took time out from their crisis for the jubilant cremation of a disciple. Swami Anand Lazarus, a forty two year old from Dallas, Texas, allegedly died of a condition symptomatic of AIDS. "He died with a smile on his face," according to a disciple close to him. Hundreds of Rajneeshees gathered on a starlit hillside later the same day to sing at Lazarus's funeral pyre. "It was a powerful experience, mixing death and celebration," said one disciple who attended.

Medical authorities familiar with the workings of cults were worried about the potential for abuses by the Rajneesh Medical Corporation even before Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's statements in September. Dr. John Clark, professor at Harvard Medical School and a well known cult authority, told *Oregon Magazine:* "You have a situation there where doctors are wearing necklaces with pictures of a guru. Under such circumstances, it is conceivable that normal medical ethics might not hold them back from using medical science for the wrong purposes if they found themselves in a conflict between traditional medical ethics and what the guru wanted."

Dr. Harold Scales of Montclair, New Jersey, another cult authority, said: "The question is, where do these doctors feel their responsibility lies—to their patients and the public, or to their guru?"

— *Oregon Magazine,* November 1985

NOTE: It was subsequently proven that Rajneesh personnel were behind all the salmonella poisonings and that the salmonella bacteria used had been cultivated in the laboratory of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation. Investigators also discovered that Ma Anand Puja had other, more lethal

pathogens for the laboratory (such as the one that can cause typhoid fever) and had been trying to cultivate a live AIDS virus.

MA PREM HASYA

A new group comes to power at Rajneeshpuram

SUZIE BOSS

Her brown eyes fix intently on the bearded face of the sannyasin who sits opposite her on this warm, early fall afternoon at Rajneeshpuram. Elsewhere on the ranch, the pace is frantic, bordering on chaotic, as Rajneesh disciples and newshounds from around the world try to sort out outrageous allegations being offered up daily by the Bhagwan. But Prem Hasya—the forty-eight-year-old former Hollywood film producer who has emerged from the shake-up at Rajneesh's right hand—displays neither haste nor inner turmoil as she stands and languorously embraces the orange-clad disciple to signal the end of their chat.

By all appearances, Hasya offers a soft contrast to her vitriolic predecessor. Unlike Ma Anand Sheela, Hasya packs no sidearm and has a voice and manner as smooth as her silk ascot. As she settles into a seat in the shade for yet another interview, waving aloft a cigarette in need of a light, the Bhagwan's new personal secretary emphasizes the dawning era of openness she is said to represent.

"I hope I am not stepping into Sheela's old shoes," she says, "but am creating my own new ones." Like her fellow sannyasins, Hasya has been quick to follow the Bhagwan's lead in vilifying her predecessor. "Sheela was abrasive and arrogant—a constant irritant. That was unnecessary." Adds Hasya, "I want to be a servant rather than a leader."

Formerly known as Francoise Ruddy (she was married to *The Godfather* producer Albert S. Ruddy), the wealthy Hasya has always been removed from Rajneesh's rank and file. Until September 13— when she was elected

trustee of the Rajneesh Foundation—Hasya says she functioned "on my own. I did a lot of coming and going."

She and a handful of other disciples are said to be well known in Beverly Hills, where they recruited upscale new followers to Rajneesh's flock at "Tantra" sessions. Their headquarters was a mansion once owned by Joan Crawford. Hasya says her past efforts at Rajneeshpuram have been devoted to work on a screenplay—quite a contrast to the ten-hour days of "worship" in the Buddhafields contributed by lower-ranking followers. Observers at the ranch remember Hasya riding about in her personal Rolls-Royce, dining on fine, Continental cuisine, and enjoying private audiences with the Bhagwan.

Now installed in Sinai Grove, the compound known as Jesus Grove during Sheela's tenure, Hasya is purportedly attempting to create a free-form organization resistant to power grabbing.

When Rajneesh began leveling charges against Sheela in September, alleging she had "turned my commune into a fascist concentration camp," he blamed Sheela's undoing on her hunger for power.

Hasya counters, "I want to not create a hierarchy, to disperse this illusion of organization, yet maintain some structure." Her hands flash with jewels as she makes a gesture of openness. "Hierarchies and stardom can create a power trip—just as I used to see in Hollywood." Calling herself "more the meditative type" not interested in personal power, Hasya expects to work behind the scenes and let Rajneesh occupy center stage.

Does Hasya have the organizational skills needed to run the 64,000-acre, 1,500 resident commune? Says Ma Prem Isabel, the Bhagwan's chief press aide now and also during Sheela's tenure, "Hasya is efficient, intelligent, classy. Anybody with good help can run anything."

Hasya's immediate stated goal is to "undo any fears or sense of control over people," both on and off the ranch. That job may be a tough one, especially if law-enforcement investigators find any proof to back up the Bhagwan's charges of attempted murders and poisonings, not to mention wiretapping. But Hasya has a larger agenda, as well: to keep the commune from crumbling like its previous leadership. Says Hasya, "This is all an experiment—an experiment worth risking everything for."

— *Oregon Magazine*, November 1985

IS THE END NEAR?

Experts and former disciples predict the cult's decline

WIN McCORMACK

"I really do think the end is at hand," says a former disciple of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, a woman who defected from Rajneesh's cult shortly before he began making the dramatic accusations about his former top executive assistant, Ma Anand Sheela, in September. "It may be a slow death," she continues, "but I don't think he can hold it together much longer."

"There are too many questions being asked at the ranch. It was common knowledge when I was there that Bhagwan knew *everything* about the day-to-day workings of the commune," she said. "One man who is still there told me: 'This is what grew in Bhagwan's garden.' I am thinking about that—and what it means—every day, and a lot of other people here are, too."

The woman was among a number of former disciples and authorities on cults interviewed by *Oregon Magazine* after Rajneesh created a storm of publicity by accusing Sheela of crimes ranging from arson and wiretapping to attempted murder and mass poisoning. While law-enforcement officers and reporters from around the world struggled to sort out the wild accusations, Rajneesh watchers and disciples debated the significance of Sheela's apparent departure from the Bhagwan's fold. New theories and rumors were advanced almost daily, but the ex-followers and cult experts interviewed were unanimous on one point: Rajneesh's exposure of Sheela's alleged crimes would precipitate a further decline of his already troubled organizations.

“A crack has happened in the dam,” says Jeanette Taylor, an ex-disciple who left the Rajneesh cult several years ago. “Sheela’s leaving is going to make people at the ranch confront things they haven’t confronted before. Truth has an amazing power—and you have to keep in mind that many people went there in the first place because they were seekers after truth, ultimate truth. And the truth seems to be that the woman who has been speaking for Bhagwan was trying to kill people.”

“There may be a hiatus for a while, during which many followers will buy his rap,” adds John Lilly, a former disciple from the period when Rajneesh’s ashram was in Pune (Poona), India. “But a lot of them are going to pick up on the fact, and fairly quickly, that he’s jiving them. And I don’t think he can keep up his sweetness-and-light act for long. He’s basically confrontational and always has been.”

“I think that we may see a slow withering away of this cult, as we have seen with so many other groups,” comments Margaret Singer, professor of psychology at the University of California at Berkeley and well-known cult authority. “There is no way, with the kind of power structure they have, that they are going to be able to pass down ‘the rule’—because the rule was to have a civil war with the society outside.”

Singer is one of many students of cults who until recently saw strong parallels between the development of the Rajneesh group and the history of other, violence-prone cults, such as Synanon and the People’s Temple. These experts now have their fingers crossed in hopes that Rajneesh’s latest revelations of wrongdoings inside his commune may presage a new direction for his organization.

“A cult,” Singer explains, “is an organization with a clear leader at the top who is in control of a totalitarian, totalistic, hierarchical power structure. All the devotion of the group is centered on him. At some point, in order for management to keep up the esprit de corps, the outside world must be defined as composed not only of lesser beings but also of beings who are ‘out to get us.’ As time goes on, the group becomes more and more at odds with the surrounding government because it is trying to establish a sovereign government of its own. When the outside society tries to say to the group, ‘This is the law,’ the cult responds by labeling the outside world as evil and corrupt. The cult members then have permission to perpetrate all kinds of

things on the outside world—including criminal and violent acts. You basically see the development of a dangerous, paranoid social organism.

"Why has the Rajneesh cult now apparently drawn back from civil war?" asks Singer rhetorically. "I think it was purely an economic decision. I think somebody just took a look at the dollars. You can't take on the state of Oregon and the United States government—it would have been the end of their wealth. And the biggest duplicity all along has been that the money meant more than anything to the leadership."

"The Rajneesh entity has paralleled the development of Synanon better than that of any other group," believes Adrian Greek, codirector of the Positive Action Center, a cult-counseling center in Portland. Synanon began as a drug rehabilitation program in California and evolved into a violence-prone cult led by Charles Diedrich. "The difference is that when the Rajneeshees were reaching the point of violence, it was Sheela who was out in front, not the leader himself. This enables Sheela to take the blame, even though Rajneesh was undoubtedly pulling the strings all along.

"Periodically, there is always a sweeping of the top leadership in cults, particularly when the cult leader is in trouble and needs someone to blame," Greek adds. "This was a smart move on Rajneesh's part. I think the end was perhaps closer before he did this."

Paul Morantz, a Los Angeles attorney who has handled a number of successful lawsuits against Synanon, agrees with the comparison between the history of the California drug-rehabilitation cult and the development of the Rajneesh group up to now. But he is less certain as to whether recent developments at the ranch really herald a new direction for the Rajneeshees. Morantz himself became a victim of cult violence when he was bitten by a rattlesnake that was placed in his mailbox by members of the Synanon group, on direct orders of Diedrich.

"In both Synanon and Rajneesh," Morantz points out, "there have been periods of extreme paranoia marked by the appearance of elaborate security forces and the amassing of a large arsenal of weapons and followed—in both cases, we now know—by covert acts of violence. The question now with respect to Rajneeshpuram is, Has the situation been totally defused?

"In the case of Synanon, there has not been a repetition of the violence since it was exposed, something that would give cause for optimism about the Rajneesh. On the other hand, purges within cults generally result in an

even more loyal and fanatical following. You can expect a drop in the population of Rajneeshpuram, yes, but this will mean that only the most fanatical of the followers remain. The situation there could end up being more dangerous than ever. I would feel much more comfortable about it if I saw the dismantlement of the arsenal and the cessation of extremist, paranoid statements about government authorities and the press."

There is no doubt, as of this writing, that disillusionment is spreading within Rajneesh ranks. There have been reports of open rebellion against the Bhagwan in Rajneesh communes throughout Western Europe and Australia, and expressions of violence—such as vandalism and looting of commune stores—inside Rajneeshpuram.

While some former followers have responded to the call and are returning, many more are not. After seeing a videotape of Rajneesh's first press conference about Sheela, Swami Prem Amitabh, a former Rajneesh therapist who had been considering returning to Rajneeshpuram, reportedly said, "I saw no light there at all. All I saw was a manipulator and a shyster."

Cult authorities such as Morantz, Greek, and Singer and former Rajneesh disciples such as Lilly and Taylor are now concerned about the psychological well-being of the troops of disillusioned Rajneeshees they expect to see exiting Rajneeshpuram in the months ahead. "People walk away from cult experiences like this so conflicted," Singer says. "So often they go on to lead lives of great self-doubt and conflict. They don't talk to anybody about it, and they keep all their guilt and self-blame to themselves." Greek has offered the services of the Positive Action Center to any departing Rajneeshees who feel the need for professional counseling.

"The technique Rajneesh uses for getting to people is to teach that there is no way a person on his own can do anything," explains Lilly. "It's very negative. It's a way of destroying egos. What Rajneesh calls 'letting go of the ego' is really ego destruction. The people coming out of there will be coming out with their egos almost completely shattered.

"I worry about them," Lilly adds. "I love a lot of them. The ones who get out on their own might get something for themselves, some sense of self-worth and strength. But the others are going to be basket cases if the cult just falls apart on them."

"We all get disillusioned in life, but we're talking big time here—I mean *total* disillusionment," says ex-disciple Sarah T. (a pseudonym). "I've been

praying for these people. This movement has attracted a lot of wonderful, idealistic, trusting people. And trust is something that, when lost, is very difficult to recapture. If you have given someone total trust—in a sense, responsibility for your life and soul—and that trust is betrayed, to recapture the ability to trust again in life and in love can be very difficult. The purity of the love that Bhagwan has always been given by his disciples is such that, afterwards, you think: 'My life is over.'"

Adds Sarah, "In a funny, ironic way, the, tables of responsibility have now been turned on those of us who have been really down on this group. Now we are going to have to show them how good and how compassionate we are. In a way, it's a beautiful situation. I want them to know how compassionate people out here can be.

"Some of them have been away from the world a long time. It's going to be a big jump for them," she continues. "But it will be a lot easier if they can realize that, out here, there is a lot of love waiting for them, and a lot of beauty."

— *Oregon Magazine*, November 1985

Farewell to a charlatan and false guru

WIN McCORMACK

In January and February 1985, Ma Anand Sheela and other top Rajneesh officials (including many of the same disciples who would suddenly leave Rajneeshpuram the following September) conducted a well-publicized series of globe-trotting visits to Europe, Australia, and the Far East. It was later revealed that in December 1984, Sheela had married a Swiss sannyasin named Dhyan Dipo in Zurich and later obtained a backdated divorce in Nepal from her former husband, Swami Jayananda (John Shelfer).

On February 19, Sheela returned to Rajneeshpuram from India, where she had failed to obtain an audience with newly elected Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, and announced that she would leave immediately on another extended trip. She said she had a major plan in the works, promising, "It's going to top the Share-A-Home program. I never do less than what I have done before." She denied in an interview that the purpose of her travels was to scout out a new home for the cult.

On February 28, Oregon Congressman Jim Weaver went on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives and, in a speech entitled "The Town That Was Poisoned," indirectly accused the Rajneeshees of having caused the salmonella outbreaks in The Dalles the previous fall. "Is there a madman lurking in The Dalles?" Weaver asked. "The poisoning was an insane act, an act of violent hatred, carried out with subtle means." Weaver then went on to recapitulate the history of the conflict between the Rajneeshees and other residents of Wasco County, emphasizing that, "the Rajneesh Medical Corporation has a well-equipped laboratory at Rajneeshpuram." Rajneeshpuram Mayor Swami Krishna Deva responded to Weaver's speech

with the threat that "fifteen Oregonians will die for every Rajneeshee who is killed in any attack on the sect." An Associated Press dispatch ridiculed it as a "rambling and incoherent speech delivered to a nearly empty chamber."

Sheela spent most of March and April in Australia, where Rajneesh followers were attempting to develop the Karri Valley resort, near the town of Pemberton in Western Australia, into a major tourist spot and commune for Rajneesh children. Her association with Jay Harmon, a well-known Australian entrepreneur and Rajneesh follower who was majority owner of Karri Valley, kept her in the news there, as did her provocative comments on television. In one interview she called Australians "uglier than kangaroos." Just before Sheela's departure at the end of April, the shire council in Pemberton rejected the Rajneesh plans for Karri Valley, and the Australian minister of education ordered the new Rajneesh school there closed.

There was news back in Oregon, as well. On May 24, a federal grand jury in Portland awarded $1.7 million, including $1.25 million in punitive damages, to former Rajneeshee Helen C. Bryon, deciding that Sheela had defrauded her of $310,000 in India. On June 3, the Rajneesh Foundation International filed suit in federal court charging the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service with violating the Rajneeshees' constitutional rights and asking for an injunction to prohibit further INS investigations of the group. Sheela announced she had been informed by a source in the U.S. Attorney's Office that a federal grand jury indictment against her and the Bhagwan was imminent. She predicted that they would be arrested sometime between June 11 and July 27.

On June 30, coinciding with the opening of the fourth Annual World Festival at Rajneeshpuram, the *Oregonian* launched a twenty-part investigative series about the cult. The articles portrayed a movement in decline, troubled by shrinking financial resources and dwindling numbers of followers. The series revealed, among other things, that Sheela and her brother Bipin, a non-Rajneeshee, had personally profited from the purchase of the Big Muddy Ranch in 1981, and showed how Sheela's overbearing behavior had helped undermine Rajneesh's movement around the world.

The theme of the festival was "Bhagwan Speaks Again." At the end of October 1984, when the Share-A-Home transient recruitment program ended, Rajneesh had broken his three-and-a-half-year "vow of silence" and begun speaking publicly again. Until the June-July festival, however, most of his

public discourses were delivered to a small group of disciples called "the Chosen Ones" (the same group, also known as the "Beverly Hills clique," would ascend to power at Rajneeshpuram after Sheela's abrupt departure the following September).

In July, Rajneesh launched a major public-relations drive, appearing on ABC's *Good Morning America* and holding his first full-scale press conference since coming to the United States. He labeled himself "the rich man's guru" and said, "This is my circus. I enjoy it immensely." Asked about the takeover of Antelope by his followers, he replied, "If a few people decided to make a dead city alive, why should I interfere?" He also said his followers would *never* coexist peacefully with their neighbors in Oregon.

On July 19, the Rajneeshees filed suit in U.S. District Court accusing state officials, including Governor Vic Atiyeh and Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer, of conspiring to drive them out of Oregon. Rajneesh continued giving press interviews and making vituperative comments throughout the rest of July, August, and early September. He said at one point, "I would rather be attacked than ignored."

On Monday night, September 16, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh held a press conference attended by representatives of the international news media. He made a series of sensational accusations against Sheela, including charges that she and other top officials of Rajneesh organizations had engineered an outbreak of salmonella food poisoning in The Dalles and had conspired to murder his doctor, dentist, and personal companion.

He subsequently accused Sheela of trying to poison him. "Sheela and her gang turned my commune into a fascist concentration camp," he charged, explaining that, "because I was not in contact with my sannyasins, I was not aware of what was being done to them." He claimed to have told Sheela, "You have become addicted to being famous, and that is a worse drug than any drug in existence." He also said that his followers had been "ugly to take over Antelope," and asserted that he now desired peaceful relations with all Oregonians.

The previous Friday, after returning from another worldwide junket, Sheela had summoned select disciples and announced that she was leaving the commune, explaining that Rajneesh had become more interested in Rolls-Royces and expensive jewelry than in the community or his disciples. She

resigned from her position as head of Rajneesh Foundation International and was replaced by Ma Prem Hasya, one of the Beverly Hills clique.

On Saturday, Sheela and a few other top disciples, after receiving a warm send-off at Rajneeshpuram, flew on Air Rajneesh to Seattle, where they caught a flight to London-Frankfurt with connections to Zurich. By Sunday, other top Rajneesh officials had resigned their positions and left the ranch. This exodus came just as a federal grand jury was stepping up its investigation of commune leaders for racketeering and possible criminal violations of U.S. immigration laws.

Members of a multiagency law-enforcement task force sent into Rajneeshpuram after Rajneesh's press conference found evidence of an extensive wiretapping operation and an apparent biological warfare laboratory. The laboratory was found to contain such books as *Deadly Substances, Handbook for Poisoning, The Perfect Crime and How to Commit It*, and *Let Me Die Before I Wake*, as well as numerous articles on assassinations, explosives, and terrorism. Investigators also unearthed evidence of a top-secret research project by the Rajneesh Medical Corporation to develop a live AIDS virus in the laboratory, and observers recalled that Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh had predicted in the spring of 1984 that two thirds of the world's population would die of AIDS within ten years.

Rajneesh, who had initiated the investigation, soon complained that the investigators were trying to "destroy" his commune. The investigators complained that they were being stymied by a lack of cooperation from the Rajneeshees. Reporters poured into Rajneeshpuram from all over the world, turning the scene into a media circus.

At the end of September, Rajneesh announced that his followers would no longer be required to wear red clothes or the "mala," the 108-bead necklace with his picture. Then, after 4,000 to 5,000 copies of the *Book of Rajneeshism* were burned in the commune's outdoor crematorium in an elaborate nighttime ceremony, he proclaimed the end of the Rajneesh "religion."

In interviews with the German magazine *Stern*, Sheela denied all of Rajneesh's accusations, including the charge that she had been intending to set up a home for AIDS victims in the town of Rajneesh (Antelope). She said of the Bhagwan, "I think that even if one would spend a fortune to study professional publicity, one couldn't learn as much as I have with Bhagwan.

He personally rehearsed with me gestures, glances and movements of the mouth. And he never ran out of ideas. He had an acute sense of when journalists started to get bored." She claimed that the proposal for an AIDS clinic in Rajneesh was one of his publicity ideas, and that she had told him it was crazy.

On October 28, after learning that the federal grand jury in Portland had issued a sealed indictment against him for violating U.S. immigration laws, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and a coterie of followers attempted to flee the United States to Bermuda in two chartered Learjets. Arrested by federal marshals in Charlotte, North Carolina, when his plane landed to refuel, Rajneesh was charged with thirty-five counts of violating immigration law and one count (later dropped) of attempting to flee the country in order to avoid prosecution. Soon after his arrest, Sheela and two other former top Rajneesh officials were arrested in West Germany.

On November 7, Rajneesh was brought back to Portland, where he was released on $500,000 bail after pleading not guilty to the immigration charges against him. However, a week later, on November 14, he returned to federal court in Portland and pleaded guilty to two of the thirty-five charges —that he originally entered the United States fraudulently and that he had conspired to abet phony marriages between American and foreign disciples so the foreign disciples could remain in the country. He was given a ten-year suspended sentence, five years probation, and a $400,000 fine, and was ordered by U.S. District Judge Edward Leavy to leave the country. He left, bound for India, immediately after the hearing.

—*Oregon Magazine*, December 1985

THE CHRONICLES

Articles written after the implosion of the Rajneesh cult

BHAGWAN'S SEXISM

Rajneesh's dirty work was usually left to women

WIN McCORMACK

The caption to a picture in the book *The Sound of Running Water,* a history of the Shree Rajneesh Ashram in Pune (Poona), India, during the 1970s, refers to "the unholy trinity of Arup, Laxmi and Sheela." At the time this photograph of an office scene inside the ashram was taken, Ma Yoga Laxmi was Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's top executive assistant, Ma Anand Sheela was an assistant to Laxmi, and Ma Prem Arup was Rajneesh's personal secretary. "It is no coincidence," the caption goes on to say, "that virtually all the major administrative roles in the community are given to women."

No coincidence, indeed. In another chapter in the book, Rajneesh laid out his rationale: "This is the point," he is quoted as saying, "the male mind is a little further away from the no-mind than is the female mind. So the ashram will be run by women until I find people who have no-minds. When the no-minds are available, then there will be no question of male and female; then the ashram will be run by no-minds."

Actually, there were two quite different and separate power systems within the Rajneesh ashram in Pune. Testifying at the trial of Rajneesh disciple Margot Gordon on international drug-smuggling charges in Paris in 1980, French journalist Patrice Zerbib, who had lived at the ashram, explained: "Everything is permitted, but within a very well-run, IBM-type structure. There are two hierarchies: that of the custodians, and that of the therapists."

Because the Pune ashram during the 1970s specialized in psychotherapy practices drawn from the human potential movement and humanistic psychology, the prestige of the therapists within the Rajneesh community was at the time as great as, if not greater than, that of the "custodians," or administrators.

While virtually all the administrative personnel at the ashram were female, most of the Rajneesh therapy leaders were male; and, according to ex-disciples, sexual exploitation of women in the therapy groups, particularly the so called "Tantra" groups, was rampant.

"It was typical of the group leaders that they would pick out which woman they wanted, then lock the door after the rest of the group left and get it on with whomever they wanted to," says ex-Rajneesh disciple Roselyn Smith. "Group leaders got lots of sex. In fact, the guys on the outside, who worked in other parts of the ashram, would call the group leaders the 'pussy pool.' They were the guys who had all the fun. There was tremendous sexism going on there, yet they tried to make you believe that because Rajneesh was picking women to run all those departments he really believes in liberated women."

Ex disciple Sarah T. (a pseudonym) remembers several putative "therapy" groups in which she participated at the ashram that she says were nothing less than out-and-out sex orgies. Of one particular Tantra group that essentially consisted of three days of sexual intercourse between members of the group, Sarah comments: "It totally turned me off. I think it was more of a group that the men enjoyed than the women."

"It was definitely an exploitation of women," contends Smith. "I think Bhagwan attracts a lot of men to him because of this. People have been very impressed by the quality of the men he attracts; he has doctors, and lawyers, lots of professionals. One of his main hookers is sex. People heard that if you went to Pune, if you went to Oregon, there was lots of sex, the women were really open, and you could get all you wanted. . . . You could pick up anybody. You could walk up to anybody and say, 'You want to get it on? You want to go home with me?' If they say no, there's loads of other people you could ask. I think he attracts a lot of men because of this. Because men can't find that anywhere else.

"The women were harangued into thinking that they were really uptight and negative if they didn't want to be sexually free. The women who didn't

take part in it were made to feel very guilty and selfish and self-centered and uptight, frigid and rigid and rejecting of men. As I get further away from it, I realize more and more . . . I used to think Bhagwan was a feminist. When I was in Pune, I used to want to write a book extracting his views on women. I thought that he supported a woman's right to an abortion, that he supported a woman's right to be a leader. Women ran the whole ashram there, and I was so impressed by that. But as I get further away, I realize that he's got the macho-male trip down flat; the way he got women to be sexual servants for men is every man's fantasy."

Ma Anand Sheela, in an unusually relaxed mood, watching her husband play chess with another sannyasin.

According to Smith, Rajneesh—although reputedly being too sick to have sexual intercourse any longer (Rajneesh's longtime "companion," or mistress, an English woman named Ma Yoga Vivek, supposedly told friends at the Pune ashram in the late 1970s that she had to be back home every night at 11:00 PM "to masturbate Bhagwan")—was known to be obsessed himself

with human female sexuality. "Someone told me," Smith avers, "that he picked as mediums—the disciples who dance around him and supposedly transmit energy from him, the master, to the audience—women who could have orgasms right there on stage in front of him. I don't know if that's true, but I do know that in Pune, the mediums, about fifty of them, all lived in his quarters, Lao Tzu House; and that at night, all throughout the house and the vicinity, all you could hear were the sounds of women orgasming. He surrounded himself in this house with women, and all you could hear through the night was yelling and screaming from these women. He definitely has some thing about female sexuality." In the early '70s, before his health began its apparent precipitous decline and he turned to such acoustical sexual pleasures, Rajneesh's physical appetite for female followers was known to be prodigious.

Besides servicing male Rajneesh followers sexually both inside and outside the therapy groups in Pune, many female followers also worked part-time as prostitutes in Pune, Bombay, and other Asian cities to raise money to pay their keep at the ashram. Some female disciples later worked as prostitutes and striptease artists in various cities in Europe and in San Francisco to earn their living and raise money to contribute to the new commune in Oregon. And, in addition to Gordon, the half dozen or so Rajneesh followers arrested and tried in Europe and Canada on drug smuggling charges in the 1979–80 period were all apparently females. Most of these disciples claimed in court that they had been psychologically coerced or induced into smuggling drugs out of India by men at the Pune ashram.

When Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh transferred his operation from Pune to Oregon in 1981, the emphasis within his community shifted from personal and interpersonal exploration to the arduous job of building—and defending—the new city of Rajneeshpuram; the administrators, now called "coordinators," came more to the fore. The majority of the coordinators who administered the various "departments" at Rancho Rajneesh were women. This group was referred to by Oregon writer Kirk Braun in his 1984 pro-Rajneesh book, *Rajneeshpuram: The Unwelcome Society,* as the "Ma-Archy," and later by the *Oregonian* as the "Dowager Duchesses." Atop this matriarchal pyramid sat Ma Anand Sheela, who had succeeded Ma Yoga Laxmi as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's top executive assistant. Braun pictured

Sheela in one passage as "Sheela, the matriarch . . . amongst her children." Braun also quoted Ma Prem Karuna, who was the mayor of Antelope until she was demoted within the Rajneesh hierarchy, as explaining the predominance of women administrators this way: "Women tend to be more in tune and feel less that they always have to have a rational reason for their decisions. . . . In general, my experience with the women who are administrators [is that they] are more willing to move quickly, less hesitant, less always figuring out things in a way that is dysfunctional."

During the Rajneeshees' tenure in Oregon, Ma Anand Sheela— described by *New Yorker* writer Frances Fitzgerald as "observably the queen of Rajneeshpuram"—achieved unique national as well as local notoriety for her strident and belligerent manner in dealing with outsiders. While admitting that there were exceptions to the rule—such as Arup and Ma Prem Isabel, the public relations director at Rajneeshpuram, whom they describe as more gentle and nurturing—Smith and Sarah T. both say that Sheela's public persona was not radically different from that of the typical Rajneesh female administrator.

"Most of the women running departments were big, husky, fat women, like Sushila [Ma Yoga Sushila, who for a long time was the top Rajneesh fund-raiser, and who was also Sarah T.'s roommate in Pune], says Smith. "Very aggressive and very mean and very manipulative. . . . They seemed just like commandants in Nazism to me. It's the closest experience to what I've read about Nazism that I've ever had. The kind of women that ran that ranch, that's how I've pictured the commandants of the Nazi concentration camps."

Agrees Sarah T.: "It was usually very bitchy women who ran things, like Vidya [Ma Yoga Vidya, who was in charge of personnel at the Pune ashram and at the ranch in Oregon and was president of the Rajneesh Neo-Sannyas International Commune, legally the provider of the workforce that built Rajneeshpuram]."

Smith and Sarah both cite the infamous Deeksha, who oversaw the kitchen operation at the Pune ashram, as a stellar example of the kind of woman administrator favored by the Bhagwan. Says Smith: "The things I heard about that woman were just horrible. Terrible intimidation. Her technique was to demean a person and make them feel like they're just low and ugly and inadequate and stupid and foolish. She'd come into the kitchen and she'd put her hands on her hips—she's a big, fat, ugly Italian woman—and she'd yell

at a person and tell them how stupid they were, and how could they be so dumb and how did she ever get stuck with them. Just constantly demeaning people. Her people were just like slaves. People were so afraid of Deeksha, you'd walk into the kitchen and there'd be utter silence."

In *The Sound of Running Water,* Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is quoted as saying regarding Deeksha: "Deeksha is the dragonmaster! When I don't succeed with somebody, I send them to Deeksha! Simply surrender to Deeksha. . . . This is one of the things that has to be learned in the community: everybody should start learning to surrender to the community, otherwise the community cannot grow a soul, it will remain a crowd. . . . When you surrender to Deeksha, it is just through Deeksha that you are surrendering to the community. . . . Sooner or later I would like to create a collective community soul."

According to Sarah T. and numerous other former sannyasins, Rajneesh strongly discouraged his female disciples from having children and strongly encouraged women followers—especially his women administrators—to have themselves sterilized. Sarah recalls that in 1980, the year before Rajneesh left India, nearly all the top women in the ashram hierarchy underwent sterilization at the ashram medical center. The method of sterilization used there, she says, was cauterization of the fallopian tubes.

Rivalries among the Dowager Duchesses comprising Rajneesh's Ma-Archy were reportedly intense, and apparently to some extent deliberately fomented by Rajneesh himself. Says Sarah T.: "It was kind of like a medieval court, like the Medicis or something. Lots of intrigue, backstabbing, favorites, and ladies-in-waiting. You could really do an incredible drama comparing the ashram and the commune with the Medicis' court." Rajneesh once explained in Pune: "The open secret is that you can be free only if you have put too many women around you. Then they are so concerned with each other, they leave you absolutely alone. . . . Their jealousies, their envies are enough to keep them occupied."

Rajneesh also made it quite clear in Pune that he, not his women assistants, was the ultimate power within his community. He said, regarding his then top executive assistant: "And always remember that Laxmi never does anything on her own. She is a perfect vehicle. That's why she has been chosen for the work." In fact, when Ma Yoga Laxmi failed in repeated attempts to find land suitable for Rajneesh's projected new commune, she

was summarily dismissed and replaced by Ma Anand Sheela, who pushed to locate the new commune in America.

Sheela indisputably turned out to be the most tyrannical, amoral, and ruthless of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's executive assistants so far, both in her conduct toward those outside the commune whom she perceived to be enemies of the Bhagwan and in her treatment of those inside the commune whom she perceived to be threatening to her own power and standing. She saw to it that other strong women administrators who might challenge her authority, in particular Deeksha and Sushila, were exiled from the Rajneesh movement; the woman she herself had deposed, Laxmi, was for a long time not even allowed to live at Rancho Rajneesh, despite her unwavering devotion to the Bhagwan.

With the assistance of Ma Anand Puja, a Filipino nurse who ran the Rajneesh Medical Corporation (despite a disproportionately large number of doctors at Rajneeshpuram, all or almost all of them men), Sheela arranged the poisoning of Jefferson County District Attorney Mike Sullivan, Wasco County Court commissioners William Hulse and Raymond Matthews, and over seven hundred restaurant patrons in The Dalles. She and Puja allegedly drugged dissidents within the commune, quarantined enemies on the basis of spurious AIDS-test results, made repeated attempts to poison and kill Rajneesh's personal physician, Swami Devaraj, and attempted to poison Ma Yoga Vivek. Puja, whether on her own initiative or at Sheela's instigation, also was apparently trying to culture a live AIDS virus in a secret biological-warfare laboratory at Rajneeshpuram when the commune, happily, self-destructed.

Despite Sheela's precautions, a rival to her throne had finally emerged when her management of the commune and its relations with the outside world began to go awry: Ma Prem Hasya, one of the leading members of a group of well-to-do sannyasins from Hollywood known as the "Beverly Hills Clique," who in the spring of 1984 married Devaraj, not long before Devaraj was allegedly first poisoned (Hasya herself was later reportedly quarantined for over a week inside the Rajneeshpuram medical clinic). On Saturday, September 14, 1985, Sheela, accompanied by Puja and Vidya, abandoned Rajneeshpuram for Europe; she was quickly followed into exile by Ma Prem Savita, the Rajneeshees' chief accountant; Ma Anand Su, the president of the Rajneesh Investment Corporation; and Ma Shanti Bhadra, the

treasurer of the Rajneesh Foundation International. Hasya succeeded Sheela as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's top executive assistant, but her reign at Rajneeshpuram was short-lived; before the end of the year, Rajneesh, after attempting to flee the country to avoid indictment for immigration fraud, pleaded guilty to two charges of violating immigration law and was put on probation and allowed to leave the United States legally. He eventually went back to Pune and reopened his ashram there.

In summer 1986, Sheela, Puja, and Shanti Bhadra pleaded guilty in federal and state courts to a number of charges, including attempted murder, and were sentenced to jail. The other former Rajneesh official sentenced to jail was ex-Rajneeshpuram mayor Swami Krishna Deva. Other Rajneeshees who pleaded guilty to various charges were given probation. By the end of 1986, some eighteen former and present Rajneeshees had been convicted of crimes in Oregon; another ten charged with crimes remained fugitives. The overwhelming majority of those indicted and those sentenced were women.

In 1990, Dhyan Yogini, aka Alma Peralta, confessed to her own involvement in the conspiracy to murder U.S. Attorney Charles Turner. She assisted prosecutors by testifying against the other defendants she named in exchange for a deal; she received only two years in prison. Her confession sparked the indictment of seven other conspirators. Of the eight members of the plot, seven were women.

Throughout the nineties each of the coconspirators was indicted, extradited to Oregon, and tried for her participation in the assassination plot. Most of the members of the plot served time in prison for attempting to kill the U.S. attorney and for participating in the Rajneesh wiretapping scheme.

1986

BHAGWAN'S RICH FOLK

Rajneesh favored the wealthy, so the wealthy favored him

"Money [is] easier to get from those who have it," instructs the confidential minutes of a coordinators' meeting at Rajneeshpuram on November 14, 1982. "If anyone knows any people with some connection with Bhagwan who have money, give the name to Mrudula to call them."

Since the birth in the early 1970s of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's cult, quite a number of people with money have been connected with him, including Prince Welf of Hanover, Germany (who died in early 1981 as a result of an accident in a Rajneesh karate group in India), the Marquis of Bath, and American heirs and heiresses to Learjet, Baskin-Robbins, and *San Francisco Chronicle* fortunes. Rajneesh's earliest financial supporters were wealthy Indians in the area of Bombay, to whom he preached the doctrines of libertinism and self-indulgence that ran diametrically counter to Indian spiritual traditions. An Indian journalist once told the *Oregonian:* "He knew what the rich people want. They want to justify their guilty consciences, to justify their guilty acts."

Many members of the Bhagwan's top leadership, including all three of his personal secretaries, have also been well-to-do. Rajneesh's first executive assistant, Ma Yoga Laxmi, who served him in that capacity from 1970 (the year he began, at her suggestion, calling himself "Bhagwan"—i.e., God—and requiring followers to wear red clothes and a mala) until she was deposed by Ma Anand Sheela in 1981, came from a politically well-connected family in Bombay. In an interview with *Oregon Magazine* in February 1983, Laxmi said simply, "The family was rich." Sheela's father reportedly was a relatively prosperous Indian landowner. Of herself, and her upbringing, Sheela once offered: "I was spoiled as a child, I was spoiled as I grew up, and I'm still spoiled."

It was long rumored that Sheela's family may have helped finance the founding of Rajneesh's ashram in Pune (Poona), India, in 1974. The family is part of a large Indian business clan or caste called the Patels, some of whose members are known to be involved in activities such as smuggling, insurance fraud, and prostitution in India, East Africa, and major cities in the United States.

Ma Prem Hasya, alias Francoise Ruddy, succeeded Ma Anand Sheela when Sheela left Rajneeshpuram in September 1985 under a cloud of criminal accusations. A French native and the former wife of Albert Ruddy, a major Hollywood producer, Hasya is said to have obtained a substantial divorce settlement from Ruddy and to have donated a large part (but by no means all) of the settlement to the Rajneesh Foundation, including money that went toward the purchase of the Big Muddy Ranch in 1981. She was part of a group at the ranch dubbed by some the "Hollywood" or "Beverly Hills Clique." Other members of the group included Dhyan John (John William Wally), heir to a large trust fund and head for a while of the Rajneesh Investment Corporation (he replaced John Shelfer, Sheela's ex-husband, in that capacity); Swami David (David Levine), known also as "King David," reputedly an heir to a North Carolina shoe-company fortune, who was for a while head of the Rajneesh Modern Car Trust (which legally controlled Rajneesh's Rolls-Royce collection); and Kaveesha (Joyce E. Schlozman), otherwise known as the "Tantra Queen."

Members of a CBS crew that had just visited Rajneeshpuram described this group to *Oregon Magazine* in December 1984—nine months before the group's ascension to power at Rancho Rajneesh— as leading an indolent and pampered life there; wearing ostentatious silk and satin clothes and gold and silver jewelry; tooling around the property in their own private Rolls-Royces; dining nightly at a gourmet Zorba the Buddha restaurant; "worshipping" during the day by working in luxurious quarters on a never-finished screenplay about the cult; and receiving then-rare private audiences with Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh.

In 1983, the group spent time at a mansion in Beverly Hills, donated to the Rajneesh Foundation by Dhyan John, trying to recruit rich and well connected Hollywood celebrities to the Rajneesh movement, primarily through Tantric sex orgies orchestrated by Kaveesha. It has been reported that one of the reasons the Bhagwan replaced Sheela with Hasya was Hasya's greater success, through her access to Hollywood money, in obtaining new Rolls-Royces for him (he reportedly at the end had ninety-three of them, including six purchased after the blowup at the ranch in September 1985).

Also in 1983, a group of defectors from the Rajneesh cult calling themselves the "Wild Geese" (after the title of Rajneesh's last lecture in

India before leaving for the United States, "The Goose Is Out") wrote regarding Rajneeshpuram: "Only those that give large donations of money to the organization and those with the needed technical skills are allowed to stay. Basically, Rajneeshpuram is a 'working country club' for the rich." And further back, in 1979, the judge in the trial of an English sannyasin in Paris on drug-smuggling charges summarized his personal investigation of the Rajneesh ashram in Pune as follows: "Apparently one meets there the lost people of the Western World, but not those who have 'end of the month' problems—laborers, housewives, etc.—those who break their backs to feed their families. No, these are the rich people, not knowing what to do with their money, not knowing what to do with their lives."

1986

THE RAJNEESH THEFT OF THE CHURCH OF RELIGIOUS SCIENCE OF LAGUNA BEACH

The Rajneeshees wove a tangled web in the fabled beach community

WIN McCORMACK

I. The Path of Enlightenment

The Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach (CRSLB) used to sit on a beautiful, six-acre piece of property just outside the Laguna Beach city limits. Past the iron gates at the main entrance at 20062 Laguna Canyon Road, a concrete driveway wound over a small stone bridge across a narrow creek, past several modest buildings and a parking lot on the left, around an expanse of lawn bordering the creek and some other small buildings, then up to the church itself, a striking wood-and-glass structure with a triple bell tower jutting high against the backdrop of a verdant hillside. On an ordinary day or night, the setting seemed to radiate an atmosphere of palpable harmony and peace.

For a long period of time, however—virtually an entire decade, from 1976 to 1986—harmony and serenity had little to do with 20062 Laguna Canyon Road, and therein lies our story. It is the story of a minister, once beloved by his congregation, who became entranced by Eastern religious philosophy and broke with Religious Science; who persuaded or duped his congregation into ratifying measures that enabled him to exert control over the final destiny of their church and its assets; who became a disciple of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and then, with the assistance of Rajneesh's top leadership, helped to orchestrate the transfer of the church property to a

Rajneesh corporate entity. It is also about a congregation that let its minister go too far and then, too late, desperately tried to recapture what it had lost. It is perhaps—like all aspects of the Rajneesh saga—a complex story of manipulation, chicanery, and betrayal, of idealism, disillusionment, and heartbreak. In many of its details and its general outline, it foreshadowed even more nefarious events 1,000 miles to the north in central Oregon.

Religious Science is a "modern" religion, founded in the 1930s in the United States by a man named Ernest Holmes. Its central doctrine is what Holmes called the "Science of Mind," which teaches that the mind is the controlling factor in an individual's life, that an individual's mind is merely an extension of the Universal Mind, and that an individual achieves fulfillment by harmonizing his own mind with the Universal Mind. Though primarily Christian in orientation, it is open to diverse influences and encompasses general principles from virtually all the major religions of the world.

There are several hundred branches of the sect worldwide, the majority of them in the United States. Its international headquarters, the United Church of Religious Science, is in downtown Los Angeles. The degree of control the United Church exerts over its affiliate branches is minimal. "And that," says former CRSLB treasurer Larry Barber, combined with the deliberate openness of the religion to new ideas, "was part of the whole problem."

Barber, a large, friendly, easygoing, fair-haired man in his sixties, says that he converted to Religious Science in the mid-1970s because "I was after the mystical concept, and I felt that other organized religions didn't have it." Barber had seen an advertisement for Religious Science in a local newspaper and had gone to hear a minister named Henry Gerhard speak. "He was," Barber says, "a tremendously dynamic, charismatic speaker." Barber joined the Church of Religious Science in Laguna Beach.

The CRSLB was founded in 1954, with a charter from Ernest Holmes himself. Henry Gerhard succeeded its founding minister in 1960. In 1964, the church purchased a vacant lot at the corner of El Toro and Laguna Canyon roads. In 1966, construction on the main church building was completed, at an approximate cost of $325,000. The keynote speaker at the building's dedication was a Dr. Hornaday.

Gerhard, according to Barber, had an exotic and somewhat mysterious background. He was said to have been born in the Soviet Union of German Mennonite parents, and to have migrated with his parents to Canada at the age of seventeen. He reputedly was first ordained as a Baptist minister in Texas, where he went on the stump as a Communist who had found Jesus. He evidently spoke both Russian and German, the latter fluently. His original name was Wiens, which he legally changed to Gerhard in 1966, the same year the CRSLB's church building was finished. Barber describes him as a burly man, about five-feet-ten-inches tall, with a craggy face and dark, graying hair.

Gerhard was popular with his congregation. Indeed, he seems to have held them in thrall—at least until 1976, the year that looms as a watershed in the CRSLB's history. Gerhard had undergone a serious stomach illness in the latter half of 1975. When he recovered, his sermons began deviating from and sometimes contradicting the teachings of Holmes, and a schism developed within the church. Over the next two years, attendance at Gerhard's Sunday sermons dropped dramatically; many members left the church completely, some to form a rival Church of Religious Science of Laguna Hills. CRSLB board member Gerhard Stehr submitted a letter of resignation, dated January 6, 1977, that suggested the nature and tenor of the controversy:

"The basic problem," wrote Stehr, "is a complete change in religious philosophy. It changed from a constructive, positive religion to a destructive, negative religion. . . . The 'Truth' teaching has been called Baptist Fundamentalism and hell-and-damnation preaching. All this mixed with Far Eastern religions. To increase the problem further, the ideas expressed as good at one time are being expressed as bad at another."

Stehr also complained about the way the CRSLB was being administered. "The attitude of those that are taking classes presently is that Religious Scientists may leave the church while they should stay," he wrote. "The fact is that the 'Truth' followers should leave and should have enough courage and conviction to start their own church.

"To replace outgoing board members," Stehr went on, "Jill Gerhard [Henry Gerhard's wife, and the assistant minister of the church] made nominations exclusively, obviously selecting those who favor the 'Truth' teaching. . . . The apparent plan by the 'Truth' movement is to drive out the

Religious Scientists. . . . What do I suggest as a solution? In light of the ever-increasing and deepening split in the congregation, I suggest the relocation of our present ministers as soon as possible."

However, it was not Gerhard and his wife who relocated from the CRSLB, but Stehr himself; he was one of the former CRSLB members who founded the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Hills the following September. Soon afterward, in October 1977, the remaining CRSLB congregation approved an amendment to the church's bylaws requiring annual reapplications for membership.

Previously, membership in the CRSLB was permanent. Barber recalls Gerhard saying, in connection with the bylaws change: "Let's get rid of the troublemakers!" A lawsuit subsequently filed in 1981 by old-line CRSLB members to contest the assumption of control of the church property by representatives of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh charged that after the new provision was adopted, "[the] Gerhards undertook a series of actions designed to wrongly exclude persons from membership. These included outright expulsion of eight members and outrageous and insulting behavior aimed at driving other rightful members from the congregation." A former CRSLB member would recall in deposition that "[t]he membership committee consisted of Henry Gerhard and his wife."

In October 1977, the United Church of Religious Science brought charges against Gerhard to the effect that he was no longer teaching the principles of Religious Science and summoned him to appear before a special committee to defend his ministry. The CRSLB board of trustees responded by dispatching a letter to the United Church expressing unanimous support for their minister. The board also began discussing the possibility of disaffiliating from the United Church in order to protect Gerhard from possible disciplinary action.

As an affiliate of the United Church, the CRSLB was required to submit proposed amendments to its bylaws to the United Church for approval. On February 2, 1978, the United Church refused to approve the proposed amendment to the CRSLB's bylaws mandating annual membership renewals. A letter from the chairman of the bylaws committee of the United Church said, in part, "After making an in-depth study of the addendum . . . our committee regrets that it cannot approve the addendum. The Bylaws

Committee is of the opinion that the addendum might possibly open the avenue for punitive reprisals and discriminatory actions against members."

On February 12, 1978, the CRSLB's board of trustees formally approved a resolution disaffiliating the CRSLB from the United Church. Barber, an Orange County businessman who was a board member at the time, says that Gerhard did not show the board the letter from the United Church rejecting the proposed bylaw change prior to the board's vote.

On February 20, the board sent the disaffiliation resolution to the official CRSLB membership. An accompanying letter stated: "In the event that the resolution will be adopted . . . certain changes in the present bylaws will be necessary in keeping with said resolution." The letter did not state what the necessary changes would be. It did state, however: "The above resolution, when adopted, will not necessitate any change of name, nor any change in the usual operation of our local church. It will not affect our ministers, their teachings, nor our members."

On March 5, 1978, the CRSLB membership of record approved the proposed disaffiliation resolution, as well as the proposed changes in the CRSLB bylaws. The principal additional change was that the minister of the church would no longer be required to be a Religious Scientist.

Why did both the CRSLB board of trustees and its membership so quickly —and wholeheartedly—endorse disaffiliation from the United Church? Barber had joined the CRSLB board in January 1977, right after Stehr resigned in protest. He attempts to explain:

"Most memberships are like sheep—they would go along with anything a board requested; there is so much apathy in any church, not just this one. And the board was trying to protect Henry Gerhard, out of loyalty to a minister of long standing, and because he had recently been so ill. He had had two serious operations—one for cataracts and one for stomach ulcers—and he was very slow in recovering. We felt sympathy for him."

The legitimacy of the disaffiliation of the CRSLB from the United Church of Religious Science—as well as the purging of the CRSLB membership rolls that preceded and facilitated it—would later be key issues in the legal battle between the old-line members and the Rajneesh followers that commenced in 1981.

After Gerhard recovered from his surgeries, his sermons became more and more imbued with concepts from Eastern philosophy and religion, which had the effect of alienating members of the congregation. In early 1978, his readings of the modern mystic G. I. Gurdjieff (whom Rajneesh has explicitly pointed to as one of his chief precursors) led him to the published lectures of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Barber remembers Gerhard saying at that time: "This [Rajneesh] is pure Science of Mind!" By spring 1978, when the disaffiliation resolution was approved by the official church membership, Gerhard was preaching from the works of Rajneesh almost exclusively.

Barber recalls his own reading of Rajneesh's discourses. "I read *The Mustard Seed*," he says, "and it seemed to have quite a bit of depth to it. Then I read some of the others, and I began to see that there was quite a bit of double-talk."

In November 1978, Gerhard asked the CRSLB board of trustees to grant him a three-month sabbatical so he could go to Pune (Poona), India, to study with Rajneesh. The board granted his request and agreed to pay his $1,000 round-trip airfare to India.

There is no record of what Gerhard experienced in Pune. However, CRSLB member Eric Berry, who visited Pune in 1980, did produce an illuminating account of his own experiences there. Entitled "Laguna to Pune, Pune to Laguna: The Strange Journey of Poor Brother Ass, aka Eric Berry," the account relates:

"We made our way through a milling mob of Orange People that thronged the main artery of the ashram as I looked for the joy I expected to find on their faces and listened for the sound of playfulness and laughter, but could find neither. Indeed, all I could see was sadness, moroseness and perplexity. Life seemed very real and *very* earnest to these young people, and the few older ones I saw seemed no more blessed with serenity than they.

"We arrived at the office where we were to deliver our tapes, explaining our errand to unsmiling faces, and were shown a young woman who would take care of us. With no sign of welcome, she took my tapes from me. 'You have only three?' she demanded curtly. 'Yes,' I replied, my hackles rising—surely she was going to thank me for bringing them half around the world? Or at least thank the center for sending them? But no! Instead: 'What's your name?' she demanded rudely, and when I told her she wrote it on the tapes, as if to say she'd soon find out if I had stolen any of them. 'I also have two

smaller ones from Geetam,' I told her, hoping to soften her behavior. But once again I had failed, as she turned to Becky [Becky Brooks, a companion from Laguna Beach who was the wife of another CRSLB member named Hugh Brooks] and repeated the routine to her.

"As we left I felt like a naughty school boy who had just been reprimanded by the principal, and my spirits were very low. Beloved Eric was feeling shockingly unloved! However, I wasn't born British for nothing, so with a stiff upper lip I smiled at everyone I passed on our way without eliciting one [smile in] return. I felt as though I was playing in a science-fiction movie surrounded by robots. 'Dear God, three months of this?!' I thought to myself. I did not communicate what I was feeling to Becky because I was too shocked to think clearly and still hoped that perhaps it was just because I was so tired that I was creating all this negativism for myself and everything would look different after a good sleep. However, later that day it became apparent that Becky, too, was in a state of shock and had felt exactly the same as I, indeed even more so, and at dinner she was discussing the possibility of returning home at once. I remonstrated with her and said I felt that having come all this way we really had to go through with it and that I for one didn't like to start something that I didn't finish.

"However! I retired to bed after dinner no longer very tired, as I had had a four-hour siesta earlier, and I fell into a sort of coma, when suddenly at about one o'clock in the morning I woke up in a panic. There was a tremendous pressure around my sinus (the 'third eye'?); I couldn't breathe and felt as if I was going to die. I started to run around the room. I was in a deep panic. This is something very foreign to my nature, as I have met death face-to-face on several occasions in my life and have never reacted in this way. I remember trying to take hold of myself by telling myself that Bhagwan says, 'If you think you're going to die—die! Go to the center of it!' And I forced myself to sit on the bed and read from the book I had on the table, which was [Bhagwan's] *Journey Toward the Heart.* And this is what I read: 'It is true: sometimes a man achieves the Truth without the help of any Master. The opposite is also true: sometimes a man achieves the Truth through the help of many Masters, not only one. It is true that you can grow alone; the opposite is also true, that you can grow in a community, in a school, in a family of seekers. It is true that a man can reach to the Final without any method; the opposite is also true.'

"And as I read this the top of my head seemed to come off and I could breathe freely and I knew quite certainly that I was going home and that everything I had come all this way to find I already had and it was back in Laguna Beach but that I had to come to Pune to see it in perspective, and I started to laugh, and I danced around the room singing, 'I'm going home! I'm going home!' I have never felt so happy, and I had a strong feeling that Bhagwan had just told me to get the hell out of here. That he didn't want me and I didn't belong! And that it was said with the deepest love to kick me into understanding!

"The next morning, I, who had been the one to reprimand Becky for thinking of backing out only the day before, knocked on her door and told her I was going home. I told her what had happened and she said, 'How extraordinary! That's exactly what happened to me!'"

Berry, whose apparent disillusionment with the Shree Rajneesh Ashram did not prevent him from remaining a follower of Rajneesh after he returned to Laguna Beach, concluded his account by remarking: "My heart is much lighter, and yesterday when playing with my dog he made me laugh so much as he was being so playful and having such fun that it suddenly became quite clear to me what bliss is. It is what I was experiencing at that moment, laughing for the sheer joy of it, without malice or cynicism, with total acceptance, unconditionally—and I doubt very much that I should have become conscious of that before I went to Pune.

"However you may see fit to interpret this story, bear in mind that whatever conclusion you may come to, the opposite is also true!"

Gerhard was at the Shree Rajneesh Ashram in Pune from January through March 1979. While he was gone, about a dozen CRSLB members—including his wife, Jill, and a CRSLB member named Shirley Bruce—became "sannyasins" (Rajneesh disciples) by mail. In Pune, Gerhard changed his name once again, to Swami Bodhimitra (his wife became Ma Sambodhi, and Bruce took the name Ma Prem Navyo). At Gerhard's *darshan* or "meeting with the master" (the Rajneesh conversion ceremony), Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh gave his new convert another name to use upon his return to the United States. Rajneesh told him:

"Yes, I will give you a new name. You have to work for me there now. . . . This will be the new name: Utsava. Utsava means celebration, and that is the keynote. Religions have been teaching people to renounce: I teach people to

rejoice. . . . So this is my message for your friends. Your group has to become more and more celebrating; and you will be surprised how celebration on its own accord becomes prayer."

When Gerhard returned to Laguna Beach as Swami Bodhimitra in April 1979, the character of his Sunday services took another bizarre turn. In imitation of the Bhagwan, he no longer preached from a pulpit but, attired in a red robe, sandals, and wooden beads, and sporting a Bhagwan-like beard, addressed his remaining congregation from an overstuffed chair. (At the first service he conducted after his return, according to Barber, Gerhard thanked the members in attendance for giving him the chair, even though it actually had been purchased for him through church funds by his wife and Bruce without anyone else's knowledge). Like the Bhagwan at his regular evening meeting with his disciples in Pune (called *satsang),* Gerhard would answer written questions from members of the audience in lieu of delivering a prepared sermon. Gerhard's answers, according to Barber, were "pure Bhagwanese" and boring; after a few weeks, Barber claims, Gerhard received no further questions.

When some members protested his latest direction, according to Louise Rash, a former CRSLB member, Gerhard told them: "If you don't like it, get out; I don't need any of you. Even if there is only one member left, I'll still be minister of this church." (Comments Barber: "Henry always thought the church was his.") In a deposition, Rash told of placing a question in the church question box that asked: "When shall this church be turned into an ashram?" Gerhard, she said, responded: "You are really stupid. You are one thick woman." In fact, that June the CRSLB took on the dual name of Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach-Utsava Rajneesh Meditation Center (Utsava-RMC), and newspaper advertising for the church, which had been suspended in 1978 because of lack of funds, was resumed.

In December 1977, at the same time the CRSLB board of trustees was debating the idea of disaffiliating from the United Church, Gerhard had discussed with the board the possibility of retiring as minister. On February 20, 1978—the same day the resolution to disaffiliate from the United Church was mailed to the official CRSLB membership list—Gerhard sent a formal letter of resignation to the United Church's director of business and finance, dating his retirement as of March 1. Gerhard thereby managed to qualify for

his pension from the United Church before the CRSLB members ratified the disaffiliation resolution. According to Barber, Gerhard did not reveal his letter of resignation to the CRSLB board or membership, and its existence did not become known to anyone outside the United Church until sometime in 1984.

In June 1980—a year and three months after his return from Pune, and three years and three months after his official letter of resignation to the United Church—Gerhard informed the CRSLB board of trustees by letter that he and his wife intended to retire by the end of the year. He proposed a retirement fund for himself and his wife, from which they would collect interest, of $100,000 (fully half the church's assets), noting: "The possible salary for the new leadership would at most be quite nominal, since it is part of the discipline, training and basic principles of Bhagwan's teaching that people working at the center do it for the love of it rather than the money." (The board eventually settled on a direct retirement payment to the Gerhards of $35,000, which was in addition to Gerhard's pension from the United Church.) Gerhard added: "I am in touch with Bhagwan regarding this matter and I am already having a qualified couple in mind."

The couple Gerhard had in mind was Swami Prem Avinash and Ma Prem Punita, aka Jack and Andrea Katz. Gerhard claimed to have met them by chance on a visit to Seattle, but former sannyasin Sarah T. (a pseudonym) says that Avinash and Punita were "old-time sannyasins, very well known in Pune." In fact, Avinash was an experienced architect who would later be involved in the designing of the city of Rajneeshpuram in Oregon. The two candidates were presented to the CRSLB board of trustees by Gerhard on September 2, 1980, and were unanimously accepted. Explains Barber ruefully: "I was ready to accept Satan himself in place of Henry Gerhard by this point." The next day, Gerhard sent a letter to the CRSLB membership announcing his retirement. The membership approved the appointments of Avinash and Punita on September 21; the motion to approve was made by Barber.

That December, after being absent from the church for a while, Barber dropped by the CRSLB for a Sunday service. He was, he says, stunned. "There were fifteen or twenty people sitting around a circle in the middle of the floor, two of them strumming guitars. That was the entire service." Barber says he complained at the next board meeting about this, and "Punita

responded with the foulest language I have ever heard anyone use." In protest, Barber resigned from his position as treasurer on January 24, 1981.

Barber remained officially a member of the church, but he was part of a rapidly dwindling congregation, and within that congregation was in a distinct minority. In January 1977, the total membership of the church had reached a high of 530. On January 15, 1978, when the first official tally of the CRSLB membership under the new annual renewal policy was conducted (at which point eight former members, some of them founding members of the church, were denied renewed membership), the total membership was 188. By November 30, 1978, when the next tally was done, it had declined another seventy people, from 188 to 118. By the time of Barber's resignation from the board in January 1981, the official membership of the church had dwindled to approximately fifty people. A majority of the remaining members were followers of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh.

As of January 1981, the CRSLB membership rolls were closed. Those who had kept up their annual membership renewals (and been allowed to) would later, during the controversy over ownership of the church property, come to be referred to as "signatory members"; those who had not renewed their memberships annually (or had been excluded) would be designated "nonsignatory" members. "Old-line" member and "nonsignatory" member meant approximately the same thing.

The man responsible for the depletion of the CRSLB rolls, Gerhard, aka Swami Bodhimitra, had retired with his wife to Grass Valley the previous December, when Swami Prem Avinash and Ma Prem Punita officially took over as ministers of the CRSLB Utsava-RMC. In his final communication to his congregation, Gerhard wrote:

> I wish to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have supported me in this ministry during the last twenty years, and especially during the last four or five years of inner revolution and transition. A special thanks goes to those who opposed me, for without them the change would not have been as thorough and real. As my Master said to me at my Darshan, when he gave me my new name and placed the mala around my neck, 'When one looks backward one can always see that nothing has ever been a wastage. Even those few moments when one had gone astray, even they have contributed

something immensely valuable; even mistakes and errors are necessary parts of growth. You are here because of all that you have done in the past—good, bad, right, wrong. So, in the ultimate reckoning, even wrong is not wrong because it helps the right. Without it, the right cannot exist, without darkness there is no possibility of light.'

I have one more request before I leave, that you receive our new leaders, Avinash and Punita, into your hearts. They are devoted and gifted sannyasins. To receive them is to receive Bhagwan, for they are the emissaries of the Master. . . . Much of what is going on here you do not now understand, but I say, 'Trust and follow the lead.' In due time the clouds will lift and the light of understanding will dawn, and then we all will be so grateful that we dared to tread the path of enlightenment.

II. A Beautiful Place for an Ashram

Sarah T., a body therapist who had been practicing in California, went to the Shree Rajneesh Ashram in Pune in June 1978, after reading some of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's books and attending workshops at the Pragit Rajneesh Meditation Center in Berkeley. A robust, good-humored woman, she thought she saw in Rajneesh's message the way to fulfill ideals of intimacy and community that had long seemed to elude her.

The ashram was situated on a lush, four-acre piece of property in the center of Pune called Koregaon Park, where maharajas used to live. Sarah found the scene entrancing. "To see 7,000–8,000 people all dressed in red," she remembers, "was amazing." It was also exotic. "There were wild birds in the air, and all the sounds and smells of India. There was this one tree on the property, and these green parrots, and every night, when the sun was going down, all the parrots would go to the tree. There would be 20,000 birds in that tree, all squawking. And then, just as the sun disappeared, all the birds would get absolutely quiet.

"It was really something. Just the effects of India. You'd go through an amazing experience just getting off the plane there."

The Shree Rajneesh Ashram, once styled by *Time* magazine as the "Esalen East," offered a full range of the Eastern meditations and Western humanistic

psychotherapies that the human potential movement growth center at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur had popularized. A typical day at the ashram began with "Dynamic Meditation," an "active" meditation supposedly specially developed by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh for Westerners. Dynamic meditation is described by Rajneesh follower Ma Satya Bharti in the 1980 book *Drunk on the Divine:* "A technique developed by Bhagwan that begins with 10 minutes of deep fast breathing, followed by 10 minutes of catharsis, then 10 minutes of the vigorous repetition of the HOO, 15 minutes of silence and stillness and, finally, 15 minutes of celebration [singing and dancing]."

Says Sarah: "People would get real spacey from doing these meditations. They would also get very emotional. They'd cry all the time. They'd become real obsessed with the process that was happening to them as a result of this meditation. And also feel more and more connected with Bhagwan while they were doing it.

"It would open you up more to your feelings, your deep, hidden feelings—because these meditations are very powerful, and are designed to open you up, especially your pelvis, which is where the body stores emotions, not just sexual energy. The pelvis is where the emotional body is held. So with dynamic [meditation], you're jumping up and down, and you're yelling 'Hoo Hoo Hoo,' and pounding that energy into the sex center. So you start feeling, really feeling. 'How many times did you cry?' If you say that you're doing meditations that made you cry every day, weep, and really get in touch with your feelings—only a sannyasin would understand the process that you started going through; only someone who's been through the process would understand. So then there's a bond, an attachment to the group. Because I couldn't very well say to very many people, 'As a result of this group where I got beat up, I really experienced something.' Most people would be just absolutely horrified!

"I spent five days in bed in a state of total bliss. I couldn't eat, I couldn't drink. I was in a totally altered state to the point where people would come into the room and just sit down and go off into meditation. You're not connected with the earth anymore. You're up in the sky and there's that space where you just kind of even out and you're in an altered state. These meditations took you into an altered state."

A new initiate's first group experience at the ashram was usually the "Enlightenment Intensive," described by Ma Satya Bharti as follows: "A

combination of the Zen technique of concentrating or meditating on a koan—in this case, the question 'Who am I'—and Western communication techniques. A strictly structured, three-day group at the ashram."

Says Sarah about the Enlightenment Intensive: "It really pushed you past all limits. It was the first group that people were usually given to do and it was meant to be a beginning group, but it wasn't like a beginning group at all; it was a real difficult group. A sannyasin killed himself once in that group. They kept it quiet, but he jumped off a balcony he got so freaked out.

"It was a Zen technique, actually. But they would take like two hundred people at a shot—a huge, huge group. And it was a residential group. You didn't leave the place for three days. It began very early in the morning, and they rang a bell and you found a partner and sat down across from this person and you would say, 'Tell me who you are.' And for five minutes you would stay totally receptive, just listen to what the person was saying, not make any facial expressions whatsoever. Then another bell would be rung, and the person would say to you, 'Tell me who you are.' And this went on from sunrise till eleven o'clock at night. At eleven o'clock you did dancing meditation. You ran an hour and then you passed out. If you could sleep. I didn't sleep for three days, except for a couple of hours. And after the group was over I didn't sleep for another couple of days, I got so wired from it.

"It does something very deep to you inside, telling who you are to all these people; and you get to feeling lighter, emptier and emptier. And there are also moments of madness when you feel like you're going to go crazy."

Sarah's first actual therapy group at the ashram was a "Tao Group." It was supposed to be led by Swami Prem Amitabh, aka Robert Birnbaum, but he was in America at the time; Swami Prem Siddha, aka Dr. Leonard Zunin, a California psychiatrist and author of a book called *Contact* who was later active in the Rajneesh Medical Corporation at Rajneeshpuram, was substituting for him. Ma Satya Bharti describes the Tao Group in these words: "An unstructured group which focuses on what one is doing to prevent the free expression of one's being. Participants are thrown into spontaneous situations and encouraged to allow themselves to express freely their emotions, fears, expectations, disappointments, joys and to stay with the flow of events that follows as a consequence of this expression."

Says Sarah: "It was a five-day encounter group, and there was a lot of violence throughout the whole group. But it was on the fifth morning, the

morning session of the last day that I got involved in it. The group leader told the men in the group to beat this woman up because she hadn't been participating. And they started to beat her up—eight guys and one girl. And I just couldn't stand it. So I went over and I grabbed this guy and pulled him away from her. And he backhanded me, and I went flying. And we had been friends in the group, you know. I just couldn't stand to see it happening, so I went back again and I pulled him away from the woman again, and he turned on me and just really beat me. I had never been in a fight before, didn't know how to fight. Especially with this really strong man. He was real strong." Sarah says she emerged from the Tao Group with two cracked ribs, a concussion, and a subconjunctival hemorrhage in each eye.

Sarah also did a group with Swami Anand Rajen, an English psychologist who was another of the top Rajneesh therapists in Pune. The group was called "Samarpan." Ma Satya Bharti says: "Samarpan means surrender: to surrender to one's own being. By following one's impulses, by letting go, one grows in trust, awareness, sensitivity, vulnerability, receptivity, innocence, love. The purpose of the group is to create the space where this can happen."

Sarah says: "There were twenty people in the group. It was another residential group; you couldn't leave. They brought food to you. No one wore any clothes. Rajen walked in and sat down on a pillow and just stared out into space. That went on for two or three days. We just sat there absolutely paralyzed with fear. Finally he came out of his meditative state and said, 'I'm going to tell each of you what your trip is.' And he went around the room, and I can remember the terror, you know. Because it wasn't coming from a kind, loving kind of place. It was like we were going to be unmasked in front of all these strangers. That was the feeling. And he went around in the circle and told everybody what they were sitting on, emotionally, what was going on with them, and then the group absolutely exploded. Just exploded. Fights in every corner. I remember Rajen telling this one swami to rape a woman, and he did. And he had such control over this woman that she allowed it to happen.

"You'd been sitting in a confined room for three days, and somebody would just glance at you. Or you'd watch somebody and how they were behaving, and they'd remind you of your father or, you know, something that had happened to you at some time in your life. And you'd just flip into a

place where whatever was going on inside of you would start coming out. No matter what it was, things would come out of you.

"On the third day I can remember standing out on the balcony, and I wanted to jump. I felt so bad I wanted to jump off the balcony. Somebody came up to me and said, 'What are you thinking?' And I said, 'I'm thinking that I'd really like to jump.' And there were a whole bunch of people who agreed that suicide looked really comfortable at that point, compared to the way it felt in the group room.

"These groups would break you down. A friend of mine came up and got me one night because her roommate had just come out of an encounter group. The girl was terrified. She was like in a catatonic state, hysterical, I mean—I didn't know what to do with her. I worked with her, got her calmed down, but I mean, I had never experienced—I still have never experienced—anything like the state I saw that girl in. I mean, you just would—it would tear everything out of you. Open you up so wide and make you so vulnerable that you could be told anything and you would believe it. Whatever that group leader said to you, it was like God was talking through him.

"Not all of the groups were violent. A lot of them were meditative or energy groups. But those that were encounter groups—you didn't do those and not come out changed. It would be impossible to go through that experience and come out the same way you had gone in."

Sarah returned to California in spring 1981. After her return, she became involved in launching a Rajneesh center in Santa Cruz. One night, while attending a conference for Rajneesh center leaders in San Rafael, she found herself sharing a hot tub with Swami Prem Avinash and Ma Prem Punita from what they referred to as the Utsava Rajneesh Meditation Center in Laguna Beach. Avinash happened to tell her that Swami Anand Somendra, who had been a good friend of Sarah's in Pune, was coming to his center to do a three-day workshop.

"Oh," Sarah commented, laughing, "you're going to have a good time. You haven't lived until Somendra has come to do a group." Avinash asked if she would like to come down to Utsava and help out with the arrangements. Sarah happily agreed.

Somendra, formerly Dr. Michael Barnett, a British psychiatrist and author of a book called *People Not Psychiatry,* was another of the top Rajneesh

group therapy leaders, along with Amitabh, Siddha, Rajen, and Swami Anand Teertha, the main Rajneesh group leader who had developed the basic violence-prone Rajneesh encounter group format from an admixture of Synanon and Esalen group techniques. But Somendra, according to Sarah, had his own unique personal style.

"He was a real magical cat," she says. "I mean, he can induce trance states in people, just like Bhagwan does. His workshops were really a production. He traveled with an entourage of about fourteen people, most of them women. A couple of weeks before he came you'd get a list of all the things to have available for him when he got there—the particular kinds of wine, the particular kinds of cheese, the particular kinds of crackers; everything that was to be available to him.

"It was a huge undertaking. I had to set up all of the food, and all of the publicity, and take care of Somendra. I had to bring people down from Northern California to help with the work."

According to Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach financial records, a total of $16,208 of church funds was expended in direct connection with Somendra's workshop there in late May or early June 1981; of this, the records show, $3,200 was paid to Edgewater Realty in Laguna Beach for weekend accommodations for Somendra and his entourage.

After Somendra's workshop, Sarah was preparing to return to India when she received a telephone call from Ma Yoga Sushila, aka Maxine Tribe, aka Susan Wallach, aka Ma Yoga Sushila Tribe, her roommate at the Pune ashram. (Sarah, despite being friends with Sushila for a long time, never learned her non-Rajneesh name). Sushila was calling from New York City.

"Don't leave," Sushila told her. "Stay put. Bhagwan is here in America."

As is now known from material made public by the U.S. government in connection with guilty pleas by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and his former top executive assistant Ma Anand Sheela, aka Sheela Silverman, to charges of immigration fraud, secret preparations by Rajneesh and his top assistants for a possible move to America had begun the previous March. Rajneesh's first top executive assistant, Ma Yoga Laxmi, had searched for a long time for a large piece of land in India on which a new and more ambitious commune could be established, but her efforts had been frustrated by the Indian government; when it became clear that she had failed, she was replaced by Ma Anand Sheela, an Indian sannyasin who had gone to college in Montclair,

New Jersey, and who had been married to an American named Silverman, recently deceased in India under obscure circumstances. Attention then turned to the United States as a possible relocation site for the Rajneesh community. Added impetus was given to leaving India by the fact that the Rajneesh Foundation in India had lost its tax-exempt status as a charitable organization.

In March, Rajneesh asked his top assistants to write position papers outlining the pros and cons of his moving permanently to America. In April, after reviewing the papers, Rajneesh told Sheela and other assistants to begin making preparations for such a shift. Sheela then met with a group of thirty of the most trusted followers and informed them that Rajneesh had decided to move to America. She asked those assembled to keep the decision confidential, so that the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) would not find out about the plan.

During April and May, according to evidence amassed by the government, there were extensive discussions among top Rajneesh officials in Pune about how to obtain permanent-resident status in the United States for sannyasins who were not American citizens; the method finally agreed upon was to arrange marriages between American and non-American sannyasins, and about a dozen such marriages took place before Rajneesh left India (after Rajneesh's arrival in the United States, according to government figures, approximately four hundred such marriages occurred). At the same time, there was a debate within the Rajneesh hierarchy about whether Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh should attempt to obtain permanent resident status in the United States before or after his going there; Sheela finally resolved that he should obtain a temporary visa that would permit initial entry into the country, then seek to adjust his immigration status after his arrival.

In March, Rajneesh had stopped giving his customary daily discourses to disciples. On April 11, the Rajneesh press office announced that Rajneesh had taken a vow of silence and would henceforth not speak publicly.

On May 15, Sheela announced to ashram residents that the entire ashram would soon be moving to a new location in western India; on the same day, Rajneesh's doctors announced a serious setback in his medical condition and raised the possibility that medical treatment for him outside India might be required. Also on the same day, the Chidvilas Rajneesh Meditation Center (Chidvilas-RMC) in Montclair, New Jersey, a nonprofit corporation set up

by Sheela in 1977, purchased a mansion in Montclair known as Kipp's Castle (quickly renamed Rajneesh Castle, as the Big Muddy Ranch in central Oregon would be renamed Rancho Rajneesh).

Five days later, on May 20, Sheela dispatched a group of sannyasins from Pune to Montclair to begin preparing for Rajneesh's arrival. That same day, Rajneesh applied to the American consulate in Bombay for a temporary visa to enter the United States, citing a purported need for specialized back surgery in the United States as the basis for his application.

On May 24, one of the ashram's landlords—a man who had refused to cede disputed water rights to the Rajneeshees on a property outside Pune—was sexually entrapped by a female sannyasin and a group of "witnesses" led by Sheela right outside the ashram gates. On the night of May 28, a series of mysterious fires took place on ashram properties; in one of the fires, all the Hindi versions of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's books were consumed. The Rajneeshees tried to blame the arson on the already sexually entrapped landlord. "The purpose of the arson," the U.S. government later asserted, however, "was to create public sympathy for Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh." It later turned out that the English versions of these books had already been packed and shipped to the United States.

Rajneesh's visa application was approved by the American consulate on May 29. Two days later, on May 31, Rajneesh and seventeen of his top assistants, including Sheela and Ma Yoga Sushila, secretly left the Pune ashram for Bombay. The next day, June 1, the group— unbeknownst to a majority of the followers at the Pune ashram—flew from Bombay to New York City, and then proceeded to Rajneesh Castle in Montclair.

It was shortly after her arrival with Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh in the New York City area that Sushila telephoned Sara T. in Laguna Beach and instructed her not to leave.

Sushila, a stocky woman with curly hair, arrived at 20062 Laguna Canyon Road several days later. She looked around the property and exclaimed: "What a beautiful place for an ashram!" She asked Sara to take charge of running the Utsava office, and indicated to her that from now on things within the Rajneesh organization were going to be much more severe than they had been in Pune.

“You know all about love,” Sushila told her. “You are love. But now we want you to use a stick.”

Says Sarah: “People were being brainwashed in Pune, sure; but there was a lot more freedom. And much more loving. Now the loving stopped. They told me I had to go beyond love; there was no place for that anymore. It was ugly. People were like robots. It was disgusting. It was totally against anything spiritual or loving. It was madness. It was like Hitler.”

The Big Muddy Ranch outside the town of Antelope in central Oregon—the future site of the controversial city of Rajneeshpuram—was purchased for $6 million by the Chidvilas Rajneesh Meditation Center in mid-June, around the time Sushila arrived in Laguna Beach. Simultaneously, large numbers of sannyasins from the Rajneesh ashram in Pune were arriving in the United States. Since there were no facilities yet at the Oregon ranch to accommodate them, many were sent to Utsava in Laguna Beach and to the Geetam Sannyas Ashram, a Rajneesh retreat established in 1976 in the town of Lucerne Valley near Lake Arrowhead in California’s high desert country. Geetam had long had the distribution rights for all of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh’s books in North America.

According to Sarah, her ex-roommate’s responsibility at this point was to raise the money to finance the new commune in Oregon. “Sushila was real good with money,” Sarah explains, “and she was always one of Bhagwan’s right-hand people. She was the one who set up everything for Bhagwan in America. When Bhagwan came, he said: ‘Two people speak for me—Sheela and Sushila.’ Sheela’s job was to run the operation in Oregon, and Sushila’s was to develop the financial base for it.”

Previously, Sarah explains, the local centers had operated independently, existing just to support themselves, and the Pune ashram had little or nothing to do with them. After the Bhagwan came to the United States, all the money from the local centers was redirected to Oregon. The focus in northern California, Sarah says, was on business; Sushila went around closing down centers, merging them together, and telling people to start moneymaking businesses (one of the main Rajneesh businesses to flourish in the San Francisco Bay Area was prostitution). The focus in Southern California was on therapy groups. All the group leaders from Pune, according to Sarah, were sent either to Utsava or to Geetam. Geetam was the command center for the area.

As a matter of fact, both group leaders and regular followers from Pune had begun arriving in Laguna Beach earlier in the year, well before Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh left India. A number of sannyasins had come to live on the grounds of the CRSLB-Utsava-RMC in February, as part of a "residential program" that had been approved by the board of trustees the previous summer, before Henry and Jill Gerhard's departure and the appointment of Avinash and Punita to replace them. (Barber says the number of people living there soon exceeded that allowed by local flood-control regulations.) Amitabh, who was to succeed Avinash and Punita, had first come down from Geetam (of which he was president and director) to give a seminar at the church in March—the same month the decision was made by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh in Pune to transfer his operation to the United States. (In their official biographies, Avinash and Punita were listed as being among the original founders of Geetam in the mid-1970s.)

Financial records of the CRSLB show payments to Amitabh in March and August 1981 totaling $4,087.50, and payments to Somendra and Rajen totaling $16,008 in early June. They also show a payment to Swami Krishna Deva, aka David Knapp, future mayor of Rajneeshpuram, for a one-way plane ticket from Southern California to Portland, Oregon. They also indicate that a total of $18,562.87 of CRSLB funds was expensed on mattresses and pillows in May and August.

An aged accounts-payable sheet apparently from the CRSLB for August 1981 lists an outstanding debt to the Utsava-RMC of $14,698, as well as an outstanding debt to Geetam of $60,790.

One of the Rajneesh centers in northern California closed down by Sushila was the Paras Rajneesh Meditation Center (Paras-RMC) at 4301 24th Street in San Francisco. Paras was a DBA for the Rajneesh Foundation Inc., which had been incorporated as a nonprofit California corporation in 1977 (the same year that Chidvilas was incorporated in New Jersey) by, among others, Vasant Joshi, author of *The Awakened One,* the official biography of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, and Sheela's brother-in-law.

The head of the Paras center, Swami Deva Darso, had organized an extravaganza at the center for July 17, 1981, called Guru Purinama Day, to be attended by top Rajneesh leaders and therapists, including Amitabh, Teertha, and Sushila. On the morning of Guru Purinama Day, Sushila marched into

Paras, paid Swami Darso $100, told him that she was removing him as the head of the Paras-RMC and Rajneesh Foundation, and ordered him to leave the premises. Darso was apparently completely taken aback by his ouster. Afterward, reportedly, he called a sannyasin friend in Los Angeles and wept over the telephone.

The Paras-RMC/Rajneesh Foundation was moved from San Francisco to Berkeley, where it subsumed the Pragit Rajneesh Meditation Center at 3024 Ashby Avenue. Swami Deva Wadud and his wife, Ma Deva Waduda, aka David and Susan Lovegarden, founders and leaders of the Pragit Center, became heads of the new Paras Center and Rajneesh Foundation directors. (Wadud, a psychic healer who had been a "transmedium" at the Berkeley Psychic Institute and also held a degree in urban planning, would become the city planner for the city of Rajneeshpuram.) It would be approximately another seven weeks, however, before the Rajneesh Foundation Inc. would have new, legally elected directors.

Darso's ouster from Paras and the Rajneesh Foundation took place four days before Swami Prem Amitabh, at the behest of the board, attended the first of a series of special meetings of the board of trustees of the CRSLB in order to help "clear" the board members' feelings regarding the future direction of the church/center. At that July 21 meeting, Amitabh presented the board with three possible alternatives for the CRSLB's future. The board decided to meet again on August 4 to make a decision on the issue.

On July 25, eight days after Sushila's purge at the Paras-RMC/ Rajneesh Foundation in San Francisco, four days after the July 21 meeting of the board of trustees of the CRSLB and nine days before its August 4 meeting, officers of the Chidvilas-RMC may or may not have submitted papers in New Jersey attempting to change the name of that corporation to the Rajneesh Foundation (the papers specified that the decision to seek the name change had been reached at a formal meeting of the officers on June 30). After the commencement of the lawsuit between the old-line Religious Scientists and the Rajneeshees, the Rajneeshees produced documents (possibly backdated) purporting to show that the name-change request had been made in New Jersey, but lawyers for the Religious Scientists, despite repeated attempts, never were able to obtain any evidence from New Jersey officials that such papers had ever been submitted to them. On the contrary, relevant New Jersey officials would deny ever seeing such papers. Sheela, the president of

Chidvilas, would testify in deposition that Chidvilas had subsequently withdrawn the attempted name change "to avoid problems of confusion with other corporations."

On August 1, Norm Ecke, aka Swami Sarveshwar, a sannyasin who had been elected president of the CRSLB board of trustees in June, telephoned Barber and asked him to attend the August 4 board meeting. Ecke, whom Barber describes as "an astute businessman," told him: "There has been a great deal of interest in our tax-exempt status. Would you please investigate and report to the board on August 4? It is imperative. They are going to try to give the property to Bhagwan, and we've got to stop it." Ecke, who had become a disciple after Gerhard returned from Pune in 1979, was apparently not totally aligned with the Rajneesh cause.

At the August 4 meeting, both Swami Prem Amitabh and Ma Yoga Sushila were present. Sushila was there as a representative of the Rajneesh Foundation. Barber reported to the board that, in his opinion, the CRSLB did have tax-exempt status; he had found, he said, that a filing for tax-exempt status had been made, and he also expressed the view that, despite its disaffiliation from the United Church, the CRSLB was probably still covered by United's umbrella.

"Not according to our investigation!" Sushila exclaimed.

Ecke summarized the three possible alternatives that Amitabh had outlined at the previous meeting—"turning the Church/Center completely over to the Rajneesh Foundation; creating a Church/Center based on other teachings as well as those of Rajneesh; or allowing the Rajneesh Foundation to take over all the administrative functions of the Church/Center and remain in the role of tenant." Sushila stated that she had had a telephone conversation with Gerhard and that he had sent this message: "It has always been my desire that the property go to Bhagwan." Swami Prem Avinash, the church minister, made a motion that the church and all its assets be handed over to the Rajneesh Foundation. The motion passed four to three, with Bruce (aka. Ma Prem Navyo) and Berry voting in favor of it and Ecke voting against it.

An on-the-spot study by Barber of the CRSLB bylaws revealed that such a decision could only be made by a vote of the general membership of the church. A motion was made by board member Jim Parnell to call a general membership meeting to vote on whether or not to turn over the CRSLB to the

Rajneesh Foundation. The motion carried, despite strong urging by Sushila that the board hold off making a final decision and choose the option of simply allowing the Rajneesh Foundation to operate the CRSLB-Utsava-RMC on a lease basis for a period of time. According to minutes of the meeting, Sushila "expressed concern . . . that feelings of ambivalence and resentment would go against exactly what Bhagwan was all about," and said that "this type of atmosphere would not be appropriate if the Rajneesh Foundation was to stay at the center."

Board member Hugh Brooks—husband of Becky Brooks, Berry's companion in Pune, and a Rajneesh follower who, like Ecke, had voted against the motion to give away the church property—then introduced a motion of his own that he had prepared beforehand with the assistance of Ecke and Parnell, whose wife was a sannyasin and who was the third board member to vote against the give-away resolution. The motion read:

> That the Board of Trustees of the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach propose to the Membership of this Church/ Center that the assets, properties and financial control be turned over to the Rajneesh Foundation, provided however that the Rajneesh Foundation is desirous of this transfer as evidenced by a letter of agreement in concept signed by a legally authorized member of the Rajneesh Foundation. The letter of agreement in concept shall state that the Rajneesh Foundation, provided that a majority of the members so votes, will assume all further responsibility for the administration of this Church/Center.

Brooks's motion was seconded and carried. The board decided to meet again on August 8 to draft a letter to the general membership explaining its decision.

At the very end of the meeting, Avinash—the very person who had made the motion to give the property away—resigned as minister of the church and suggested Amitabh as his replacement. No action was taken on the suggestion.

Brooks's motion at the August 4 board meeting may have put Sushila in an even more difficult position than it was designed to. Old-line CRSLB

members and attorneys representing them in their suit against the Rajneeshees over control of the church property would later theorize that Sushila's interest in the tax status of the CRSLB and her reluctance to take legal control of its assets at that point might have derived from the fact that if the CRSLB did not have tax-exempt status, the receiver of the gift would probably have to pay a gift tax on the property; and they would argue that Brooks's motion, by calling for the Rajneesh Foundation to assume complete financial responsibility for the church, probably forced that issue.

In addition, the old-line members would point out that, regardless of the church's tax status, there was at the time no Rajneesh Foundation to receive the donation: the Rajneesh Foundation in India had had its tax-exempt charitable status revoked by the Indian government and had been disbanded just prior to Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's departure from India; the Rajneesh Foundation in California was without directors and officers; and the Chidvilas Center in New Jersey had applied to change its name to Rajneesh Foundation, but the application had not been processed. The old-line members would speculate that Sushila had wanted to delay the Rajneeshees' assumption of control of the CRSLB until a Rajneesh Foundation in California, New Jersey, or Oregon could be properly constituted to receive the gift, or until both that problem and the problem of the CRSLB's tax-exempt status could be straightened out.

Be that as it may, the next special meeting of the CRSLB board of trustees did not take place on August 8—as scheduled—but on the morning of August 6; and at that meeting the board, at the prompting of Sushila, reversed course and voted to rescind its motion to take the proposal to donate the CRSLB to the Rajneesh Foundation to the entire membership for a vote—though not to rescind the prior motion to make the donation. Instead, the board voted to postpone a final decision for approximately two months and to allow the Rajneesh Foundation to operate the CRSLB during that time. According to minutes of the meeting, the proposal was to "[c]reate a space where it would be possible for people to transcend their own resistances to growth—for EVERYBODY—community, residents and the Board. Nothing to be substituted for soul. No one to stay at Utsava if it did not suit their growth process."

Amitabh explained, according to the minutes: "Before Bodhimitra [Henry Gerhard] had gone to India he had created something in the Church that had

become meaningful to the lives of the Church members. He was deeply trusted by the congregation and had great influence over them. After his trip to Bhagwan his life changed drastically. He came back a different person—still expecting the Church members to trust and follow his spiritual guidance. But this was not Bhagwan's way, it was not up to Bodhimitra to push sannyas on anyone. The wrong energy was created from then on, whether Bhagwan was for the Church members or not.

"Bodhimitra then met Avinash and Punita—and invited them to take the Center over. Avinash and Punita were coming from a space of being with Bhagwan for many years. They came to the Church of Religious Science with the understanding that it was Bhagwan's center. Once in Laguna they found themselves in a strange situation, forced to wear two hats, one for the Church of Religious Science and one of sannyasins running a Rajneesh center."

Amitabh added, according to the minutes: "At this time there are too many psychological reasons for having [i.e., to have] a membership vote." And, according to Barber, Sushila stressed that "Bhagwan would not accept any gift unless it was given in love."

Among the specifics of Amitabh and Sushila's plan for the Rajneesh Foundation to operate the CRSLB-URMC, according to the minutes, were the following:

- Use Utsava as one of the auxiliary University group programs, to facilitate groups created in Pune such as: Centering, Enlightenment Intensive, etc.
- Placing "Rajneesh Foundation" on thrift-shop door.
- During the period of time the Rajneesh Foundation remains at the Church/Center, the Church of Religious Science [will] assume all responsibility for any legal work deemed necessary for them.
- The facility to be used to expand group programs with a percentage of donations made going to aid the construction of Bhagwan's new Commune.

Another part of the plan was a proposal to make improvements on the CRSLB grounds. The improvements proposed included extensive electrical work, renovation of the kitchen area, the creation of more individual rooms

and showers, an increase in the number of phone lines, and the purchase of mattresses and pillows.

The board of trustees met again in a special meeting on the evening of August 6 and approved a motion by Berry to authorize the expenditure of $50,000 of church funds on these improvements. According to minutes of that meeting, "Sushila assured the board that all expenses made by the Rajneesh Foundation running into Church funds the first few months would be reimbursed as the group department began to bring in more money."

The evening meeting concluded with the appointment of Amitabh as "acting Pro Tem Minister" of the church. The motion to appoint was made by Avinash and seconded by Berry. Amitabh was also made a member of the board on a motion by Bruce.

Barber contends that Amitabh's election to the CRSLB's board of trustees was patently illegal, because he was not a member of the church as required by the church's bylaws. Barber says the bylaws made the CRSLB minister—but not a pro-tem minister—an ex-officio member of the board and that a candidate for minister had to be approved by a majority vote of the membership.

Amitabh held his first service as minister of the CRSLB on August 9. Barber attended the service by special invitation; Sushila was also in attendance. Barber claims Sushila bragged to him that in Pune the Rajneesh organization was taking in more than $200,000 per week.

On August 31, Barber hand-delivered a letter to Ecke requesting a special board meeting for September 3. In Barber's presence, Ecke called Bruce, the board secretary, and asked her to notify the other board members. He also called another Rajneesh follower and asked him to contact Amitabh, whom he had been unable to reach, at Geetam. The Rajneeshees would later claim that the meeting on September 3 was illegally noticed—despite the fact that the August 6 special board meeting had been noticed by telephone also.

Larry Barber opened the September 3 special board meeting— which was attended by a huge crowd of old-line CRSLB members, most of them "nonsignatory," and by an equal or greater number of sannyasins, most of whom were not signatory members either—by announcing that its purpose was to review the decision made by the trustees on August 3 to "give this church and everything that goes with it to the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

Foundation." He pointed out that the board had also voted to bring the proposal before the membership for a vote. And he quoted from a recent *Los Angeles Times* article that said: "A well-connected diplomat told the *Times* that European and American disciples had been told to go back home and earn as much money as possible to help build a major treasure chest needed to finance the new headquarters [in Oregon]."

Barber then raised questions about the CRSLB's current financial situation. He elicited evidence suggesting that from the beginning of the year (when he resigned as treasurer) to July 31, the church's cash assets had declined by approximately $44,000 and that they had diminished by another $25,000 in the month of August. (Parnell, who replaced Barber as treasurer, resigned on May 18, and there had been no treasurer since then.)

Apparently, $25,000 of the $50,000 in expenditures on improvements of the property authorized by the board at its evening meeting on August 6 had already been spent. Berry rose to defend the expenditures on two grounds: one, that the Rajneeshees working on the property were working for free, and therefore the church was getting a bargain; and two, that the expenditures were part of the program "to give the Rajneesh Foundation a chance to show what they are trying to do for us." He assured the audience that the board had not made a binding decision to give away the property, because it had no authority to do so. "[W]e had not made a decision at any time to give it over just like that, of course the board can't do that. . . . There is nothing else, no attempt to try and give it over . . . we know we can't do that and we wouldn't dream of doing that," he said.

Barber, however, would not accept Barry's personal assurance that the board was not in fact planning on its own to give away the church property. Referring back to the board meeting on the morning of August 6, he framed a direct challenge to Amitabh. "Sushila and Amitabh did make statements on at least four occasions," he pointed out, "that if this were not given in love and if there was strong opposition they would not accept this for the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh Foundation. You did make that statement, didn't you? I would like to ask you what is your feeling now, because this room is full of people who oppose giving this church away. These are people who built the church."

In response, Amitabh gave a rambling interpretation of the history of his involvement with the CRSLB, beginning with his attendance at the July 21

board meeting—allegedly to help with difficulties between the board and Avinash—and ending with the decision of the board on August 6 to allow the Rajneeshees to operate programs at the church rather than to hand the church over to them completely or to sever connections with them altogether. Barber, however, pressed him for an answer to his question.

"My question," Barber explained, "was based upon your offer to not accept this if it were not in love, or if there was strong opposition. I say that these people here are in opposition. Would you be willing to tell your people to leave?"

"What I'm unclear about," Amitabh answered, "is what is here tonight, and who are you tonight. It is beautiful that many people should come to this meeting but what is here are accusations, and I don't know what anybody's being accused of, and I feel you are angry. . . . If this were the church membership, and they felt in any way that they do not want us here, we would leave."

Berry interposed his explanation of the origin of the problems facing the CRSLB. "It springs from Gerhard," he argued. "I am asking why something was not done at that time. Those of us who have cared to follow what he was doing just went on with it, and nobody came up and said 'don't do this.' That was the time that it should have been done, to Henry Gerhard and not to us!"

Ma Prem Punita pointed out that she and Avinash had been hired as ministers by unanimous votes of both the board of trustees and the membership; Barber conceded this, with a qualification.

"I would like to comment," Barber said, "that what Punita said is absolutely true . . . in my naïveté—and perhaps other board members were the same—we thought we were hiring a couple. We did not know we were hiring the organization behind the couple. Because, approximately a month ago, their superiors came in and summarily put them out and put them in other positions."

Barber then turned the floor over to Suanne Lewis, a CRSLB member and an attorney, who introduced a formal motion calling for the dissolution of the board of trustees on the grounds that it had been acting contrary to the bylaws of the church.

"It is determined and understood," the motion read in part, "that the present board has been misled by Bhagwan's agents and acted out of a misconception of the true purpose and intentions of Bhagwan, that is, to

convert the Church to a center promoting Bhagwan and his philosophy exclusively, thereby usurping the teachings and practice of Religious Science, the study and dissemination of its literature and tenets . . . there was no authority through which the Church of Religious Science could be offered to Bhagwan in furtherance of Bhagwan's own interests. Such detriment to the church is now null and void."

"All we ask," someone shouted from the back, "is that you give us back our church!"

"I don't remember the year when we all were here and we pulled away from the United Church," Bruce countered. "We didn't know about the Bhagwan then. We didn't do that because of Bhagwan. Henry liked to do his own thing and he didn't want the Mother Church to dictate to him what to say in his spiritual teaching."

"You said we pulled away from the Mother Church," someone objected. "We never pulled away from the Mother Church! That was the meeting when the members of the Church of Religious Science were not recognized to give a vote!"

"You were here when we amended to have the annual renewal," Bruce said. "You were all members then. Well, you haven't been here for quite a while, have you?"

"We never voted as a group on it!"

Surprisingly, Berry gave in. "Of course this place belongs to the Church of Religious Science," he conceded. "Of course it belongs to the people who put out the money. Morally speaking we have no ground to work on at all. This is something that Henry gave us and we are now suffering from it. Morally speaking, there is no question. They are right."

Berry's statement received loud, sustained applause from the old-line Religious Scientists.

Seizing the opportunity, Barber pressed the other board members: "I ask you again, will you offer your resignations?" Barber succeeded in obtaining resignations from every member of the board—even Bruce, who objected for the record that she thought the meeting might be illegal—except Amitabh (whose membership on the board was questionable to begin with). Berry was the first to resign, followed by Ecke and Brooks. Bruce and another sannyasin board member asked for recess; during the recess, they went to a telephone and called Gerhard in Grass Valley. Gerhard reportedly told them

not to resign; but, when they returned to the meeting, they submitted their resignations anyway (Parnell, who was not present, gave Barber his resignation a few days later).

Ecke, in resigning, gave a final speech: "We are resigning of our own free will," he began. "I'd like to leave with a statement. The reason I'm resigning is because I feel—and I'm a sannyasin, I adhere to the teachings or whatever they are of Bhagwan. After this meeting I might be defrocked and my mala stomped on or my orange underwear torn—I'm being facetious—I don't know but my feelings in my heart are that we cannot build anything here on the body of you people, you charter members, you members of this church, who have bought and paid for this church—and it is yours. We have our own places to go, we have our own money. We can go there. I'm sure we can go up to Oregon if necessary. I'm sure we can go to the Lucerne Valley if necessary. I'm sure that there are other places that can be bought if necessary, but I don't think we'll ever build anything right here because of you people out there. . . .

"I was a member of the board when we instituted the membership renewal and I have since found out they were highly illegal, were the wrong moves. It was designed to separate the people from this church who did not agree with the existing minister. This was wrong. I was instrumental, I will take the blame for that; I was part of it. I think I was duped, but it was me involved and I just won't say any more. I think you know my feelings.

"I think Bhagwan's teachings and his work will go on in spite of this place or whatever and that's not really important because if he is the true master that he says he is, he'll take care of it. If not, then I have to open up my other eye and look a little closer."

Near the end of the meeting, Amitabh put on the record that, "the Rajneesh Foundation has no official position here . . . the position here has been through the board to me. . . . I know of no other relationship to Rajneesh . . . this is the Utsava Rajneesh Meditation Center and from my understanding, it is autonomous. I don't think it has any—ah—it probably has its corporate papers pending, but I think that is not even fully resolved. So if you talk about the Rajneesh Foundation—I don't think that has any relevance here."

"There is no Utsava Meditation Center!" Bruce yelled out.

"Oh, I know the Utsava Meditation Center doesn't exist," Barber said. "It was a name that was given to Henry and he applied it and it was never, to my

knowledge, even voted on by the board. I do appreciate," he added, "Amitabh's statement that there may not be any connection with the Rajneesh Foundation."

Barber then motioned for Lewis to be appointed executive director and minister pro tem, "until such time as another board of trustees can be elected." In the vote that followed, only members whose names appeared on the January 1981 membership were allowed to be heard; and, according to the minutes, the required quorum of such "signatory" members (five to six, or 10 percent of the list) was present. The motion passed with one dissenting vote—that of Amitabh, whose name did not appear on the January 1981 list anyway, since he had not yet become involved with the church when the list was compiled.

Barber asked Amitabh to set a date for the Rajneeshees who were living on the property to depart. Amitabh said he could not do so as yet, but did agree to meet with Barber to discuss the subject the following morning. And before the meeting adjourned, he turned over to Barber, at Barber's insistence, the church checkbooks and corporate seal.

III. "He Wants Utsava"

The September 3, 1981, special meeting of the board of trustees of the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach, with its confrontation between the Rajneeshee-dominated board and the old-line church members resulting in the resignations of all the trustees except Amitabh (whose presence on the board may have been illegitimate anyway), was a revelation to Sarah T. Up to that point, Sarah claims, she and the other sannyasins living on the property had no idea that they were anything but welcome.

"This is the thing that was so amazing," she says. "Because, you know, the ones that were disgruntled didn't ever come. And we just— we were just totally unaware that there was this whole other faction. Until that time, we really had absolutely no idea there was any discord. I mean, these people—we'd never seen them before. We didn't even know they existed. And the board of directors had offered the church to Bhagwan. I had thought at the time, 'This is ordained. This is the magic that is Bhagwan.'

“We thought we had been given carte blanche with the property. The board of directors, the church members we knew—a lot of them went to the church for Sunday services and other programs. They really seemed to be excited that something was happening there. The place had just been sitting there with nothing going on. We really thought they wanted to be rid of it; they seemed so pleased that we were taking care of things. And we did improve the grounds tremendously.”

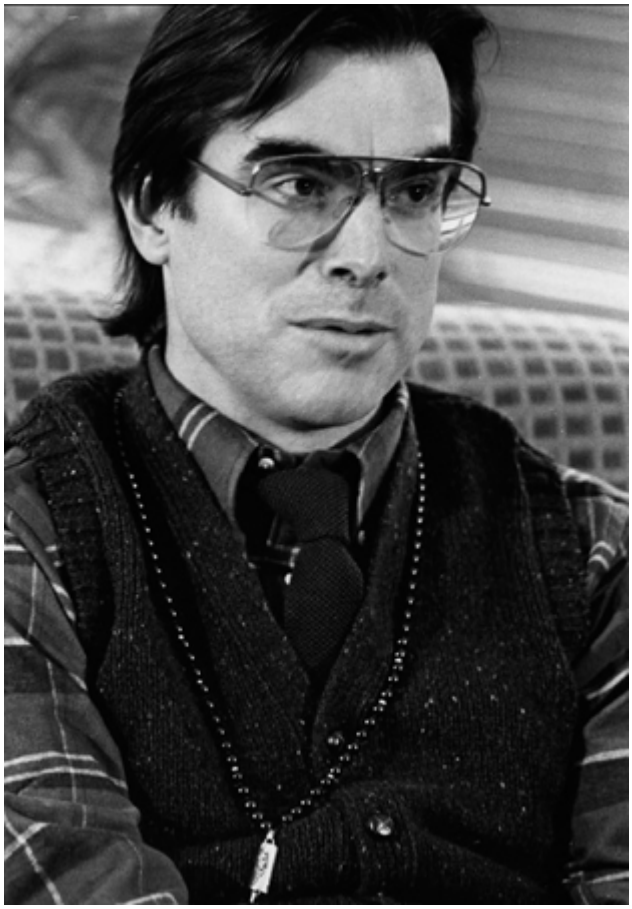
Sarah recounts her experience on the night of September 3: “I was going to check on the final preparations for the meeting, to see that things were set up properly. I was at the cottage where Amitabh was staying. I said, ‘Amitabh, I’ll be back in a second, I just want to make sure that everything’s all right.’

“The church building was one huge room, a beautiful space, with all glass across the front and the back, and steps going up the front. I went in the back door, and there was this sea of gray hair—because everybody who was an old member of the church was in their sixties now. All I could see were these bobbing gray heads. And I thought, ‘Oh, my God.’ and I went back to Amitabh and I said, ‘Amitabh, something is going on here!’

“They had invited the press, and it was very—there was yelling and screaming. It was awful. It was really terrible. And we were just blown away.”

After the meeting, Sarah and Amitabh quickly retreated to his cottage. “We were in a state of shock,” she remembers. “He looked at me and he said, ‘They don’t want us here. Let’s leave. How soon can you be ready to go?’ And I said, ‘In an hour.’”

The following day, as planned, Amitabh met with Barber. Also present were Bruce; Parnell; Swami Yoga Nishant, aka Patrick Matthews, a group leader in Pune who had been living on the CRSLB property under the residential program; and Swami Anand Apurvo, aka Joel Edelman, a sannyasin attorney also living there. A tentative date of September 20 was set for the Rajneeshees to leave the grounds. Amitabh raised an issue of food donations from sannyasins to the church totaling about $4,000. Barber made out a check to him from church funds for $3,971.



Rajneesh's lawyer and devotee, Swami Prem Niren, who, after Sheela's departure, was briefly mayor of Rajneeshpuram.

Says Barber: "They appeared to be cooperative, but I see now that it was just stalling tactics." Sarah, however, believes that Amitabh had made a decision to give up the church and that it was the Bhagwan himself who overruled him. Testimony given in the lawsuit between the Rajneeshees and the old-line church members tends to confirm her interpretation of events.

When Rajneesh disciples first took possession of the Big Muddy Ranch in Oregon that July, they asserted that they only intended to start a simple agricultural commune there—despite the fact that Rajneesh had been proclaiming for several years that he wanted to build a commune or city with up to 10,000 residents. That August, Rajneesh officials applied to the Wasco County Court for permission to incorporate a city on the property. Rajneesh himself moved from Rajneesh Castle in Montclair to the ranch at the end of August when luxurious living quarters were completed for him on the property.

Paula Johnson Stultz, aka Ma Sudhir, a former CRSLB church secretary (replaced by Sarah), also moved to Rancho Rajneesh from her home in Laguna Beach in August. She was assigned to work for Swami Jayananda, aka John Shelfer, then husband of Ma Anand Sheela and president of the Rajneesh Investment Corporation. In deposition, Stultz gave this account of what happened at the ranch with respect to the CRSLB right after the September 3 board meeting:

"Someone called Sheela," Stultz testified, "and said that something explosive was happening at Utsava. She [Sheela] called Navyo [Bruce] and asked what happened. Navyo told her about the resignations by all of the members of the board of trustees except Amitabh.

"Sheela told me that she had talked to Bhagwan and he wanted the church at Laguna Beach. 'He wants Utsava.'"

On September 13, Henry Gerhard returned to the CRSLB and addressed a rally of sannyasins, instructing them that they had a perfect right to the property.

Several days later, Swami Prem Niren, future head of the Rajneesh Legal Services Corporation in Oregon, arrived at 20062 Laguna Canyon Road. Niren, under his previous name of Philip J. (P.J.) Toelkes, had been a litigation partner in the politically well-connected Los Angeles law firm of Manatt, Phelps, Rothenberg, and Tunney (Manatt was National Democratic Party chairman at the time), before quitting the firm and going on a spiritual quest to Asia that eventually took him to the Shree Rajneesh Ashram in Pune. In an article about him in the January 1984 issue of *The American Lawyer,* Niren claimed that he had gone down to visit the CRSLB on his own initiative after reading an article in the newspaper about the dispute there. In deposition, Niren would testify that he had been cooking eggs in the CRSLB kitchen when a fellow sannyasin accidentally discovered that he was an attorney.

Sarah T., however, says that Niren went down to Laguna Beach at Ma Anand Sheela's direct request. "Niren had a friend in Grass Valley," she explains, "who was a friend of Sheela. And she [the friend] knew that he was a real hotshot attorney from Los Angeles. She called Sheela and told her about him; then Sheela called Niren from the ranch and asked him to come down.

"I was specifically instructed to take care of him. You see, he was a new sannyasin, young and green—didn't know much about being a sannyasin. But they hadn't been here that long, and they needed a good American attorney."

Adds Sarah: "The message came down from Bhagwan in Oregon: 'Fight for it.' And that's when Niren started his thing." Remembers Barber: "That's when things started to get nasty, when Toelkes arrived."

Right around the time of Niren's arrival—either just before or just after, according to Barber's recollection—Barber and Lewis received a letter, dated September 17, from an attorney in Santa Monica named Sidney Copilow. Copilow advised Lewis and Barber that he was representing Amitabh, whom he identified as the "current minister" of the church, and Jacob Katz (Swami Prem Avinash), "the former minister," and several current, unnamed CRSLB members. Copilow informed them that, according to an investigation undertaken by his office, the September 3 special board meeting was illegal under both CRSLB bylaws and California law (he did not specify the applicable law).

"We understand," Copilow wrote, "that our clients vehemently objected at the commencement of the alleged meeting that same was not lawfully called and, accordingly, any alleged action which took place therein is void and of no effect whatsoever." He warned Lewis and Barber: "Any attempt whatsoever by you or your clients to coerce by duress or otherwise, or to evict any of those persons who are represented by this office, will be vigorously opposed, and all legal and administrative remedies will be taken against you." He also informed them that "[t]he minister has noticed a special meeting, pursuant to the By Laws of all current members. At this meeting," he said, "certain things will be discussed and acted upon."

Amitabh—in Barber's view, "a non-member, non-board member, non-minister"—had in fact dispatched a letter on September 17, the same day that Copilow's letter went out to Lewis and Barber, addressed "To the Church Membership," announcing that a "Special Meeting of All Church Members" would be held at the church on Sunday, September 27, at 7:30 PM. "Among business to be conducted at this meeting," Amitabh's letter said, "will be (1) a discussion and action concerning any vacancies on the Board of Trustees, (2) discussion and action concerning the attempt by non-Members to control Church activities and (3) future direction of the Church."

Barber also received a letter from Swami Yoga Nishant, dated September 18 and signed by Nishant as "Director, Utsava-RMC." Nishant asked Barber's assistance in the payment of "past-due bills properly incurred by the Church in its day-to-day operation" and called for a negotiated resolution of the conflict between the "old members" of the CRSLB and the Rajneeshees and an agreement upon a "legal and human method to promptly elect a new board." He cautioned Barber against filing any legal action that might "prolong and exacerbate this controversy."

On Sunday, September 20—the agreed-on target date for the departure of outside sannyasins from the CRSLB grounds—there was a ceremony in the main church building to rededicate it to Religious Science. About 250 past and current members gathered for the ceremony, including Gerhard Stehr. Dr. Hornaday presided, as he had presided over the original dedication fifteen years earlier. A new board of trustees, including among its members Stehr and Barber, was nominated and elected. By the end of the day, the resident Rajneeshees had not departed from the property.

The special membership meeting called by Amitabh that took place at the church on Sunday, September 27, caused a sensation in Laguna Beach. About forty to fifty old-line members and a somewhat larger number of Rajneesh disciples showed up. Henry and Jill Gerhard were there. The gates to the property were closed at exactly 7:30 PM, and Rajneesh guards were posted to prevent anyone else from entering. Inside the gates, Swami Prem Niren—as Barber pointed out, a non-member of the church—was in charge. Passions were running high, and there were heated, acrimonious exchanges between the old-line members and the sannyasins. In a scuffle that ensued, some old-line members were, strangely enough, prevented from leaving the grounds.

At about 8:15 PM, the Laguna police—who did not actually have official jurisdiction at the site—arrived to control the snarled traffic outside. Around 9:00 PM the Orange County sheriff arrived on the property. The sheriff arranged a compromise between the two sides: "nonsignatory" members would separate to the church sanctuary, and the "signatory" members would meet in one of the small cottages.

The meeting of the signatory members commenced at 9:22 PM, almost two hours after it was scheduled to start. Barber, Lewis and Ecke were allowed to attend. Almost immediately, Ecke raised a point of order, complaining that,

while nonsignatory members had been excluded, there were people present (for instance, Swami Prem Niren) who were not and had never been members of the church.

Niren explained that he was there as an attorney representing Amitabh as well as some sannyasin CRSLB members. He introduced a Ma Prem Sheela, aka Katrina L. Weber, as his associate.

Ecke retorted that, in his opinion, Amitabh was not a duly elected minister of the church, and therefore the meeting was being held illegally.

Swami Yoga Nishant (also not a member of the church), according to minutes of the meeting, "then proceeded with his report on the recent happenings at the Church/Center. He stated," the minutes indicate, "that it was clear that there are two strongly conflicting groups who are claiming the right to control the Church/Center at this time. On one side, there are the signatory church members, those present, who legally have the right and duty to determine the appropriate operation of the Church/Center. On the other side a group, composed primarily of past members, who seeks to regain control of the Church. They have elected what they call a new board of trustees and have set plans and policy. They have taken certain checkbooks, corporate records and other things." Nishant explained that because of this situation, previously scheduled programs at the church/center had been canceled.

"Swami Yoga Nishant added," the minutes continue, "that it was his hope that by meeting tonight a clear picture could be drawn as to what the signatory members wanted for the Church; explaining that if they wanted sannyasins to stay, the sannyasins are prepared and available to take whatever steps are necessary to secure legal recognition of the Church's right to determine its own spiritual path."

Niren then reported that a meeting had been held a few nights before between himself; Nishant; Swami Anand Apurvo, aka Joel Edelman; Swami Anand Deben, aka Sidney Copilow (all of whom were non-CRSLB members); and "a group of people who were past members and had designated themselves as the new church board." Niren said that he had attended the meeting as attorney for both the Utsava Rajneesh Meditation Center and Amitabh, while Copilow had been there to represent CRSLB member sannyasins. He let slip that he and Copilow had "not yet" been retained by the board of trustees.

Niren explained that he and Copilow had advanced a proposal for a compromise solution consisting of three elements: "1) That all present Church members remain Church members if they so desired. 2) That a mutual press release and statement be issued under which the nonmember sannyasins would leave. 3) That because the sannyasins had committed so much labor and money to have programs at the Church/Center, they should be compensated. The damages were in excess of $400,000 but the lawyers would have recommended a minimal figure to end the controversy of $50,000."

Niren indicated that some "former church members" had agreed to the first two points of the proposal but not to the third, offering only $10,000 in damages, "which was unacceptable." He emphasized that he and Copilow "knew clearly that they could not make any decisions or commitments for the Church but rather only make recommendations for this group tonight."

Niren went on to unveil that, in the meantime, legal research had shown that "the current membership has every legal right to decide who they wish to remain at and operate the Church/Center consistent with due care." Niren recommended, the minutes say, "that if the signatory membership wished to have the programs and an orientation to the work of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh remain at the Church/ Center, this was legally possible."

A discussion lasting approximately an hour and a half ensued, according to the minutes, at the end of which Lewis, Ecke and his wife, and Barber stalked out. As he was leaving, Barber protested that the meeting had been "stacked."

After the exit of the four, a motion was introduced reading: "That the Church continue to include the religious and educational teachings of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh in the work of the Church." The motion carried unanimously.

Swami Prem Avinash then introduced a second motion: "That we the members authorize the minister and/or the Board of Trustees as their lawful designees under the By Laws to invite and authorize whomever they deem appropriate to conduct programs, maintain the physical premises and assets and take such action as they deem necessary to protect the rights of the church, including but not limited to the retention of counsel and filing and prosecution or defense of legal proceedings." Avinash's motion carried unanimously also.

Ex-minister Gerhard then motioned that the membership "elect and ratify" Swami Prem Amitabh as minister of the CRSLB (which he was supposed to already be). The motion carried unanimously as well.

Brooks was present and voted in favor of all three motions. Parnell was not present, nor was Berry.

Finally, the remaining "signatory members" elected their own board of trustees. The board went into immediate session at 11:14 PM, called to order by Amitabh. A new board president, Swami Anand Nirup, was elected. Then a motion was made and approved to retain Swami Prem Niren and "his associates" to "prosecute and defend the interests of the church." It was also decided to appoint Niren as the church's representative to the media. Niren recommended three legal steps: securing a temporary restraining order to restrain "others" from coming onto the property or "affecting [the] church's assets and accounts"; reclaiming the church's assets; and reclaiming the church's thrift shop. A motion was made, and approved, to authorize Niren to take these actions.

On October 1, Larry Barber and other Religious Scientists notified the Rajneeshees that they had scheduled religious services at the church for Sunday, October 4, from 2:30 to 4:30 PM. Niren gave notice to them, in turn, that they would no longer be allowed to worship at the church at any time.

The following day, Monday, October 5, Barber and Lewis, and a group of "nonsignatory" CRSLB members including Stehr, on behalf of themselves and the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach, filed suit against various individual Rajneeshees and Rajneesh entities. The core of their complaint was that the international Rajneesh leadership had conspired to seize control of the CRSLB and its assets and "wrongfully convert the property . . . to their own use," in violation of the CRSLB bylaws and the original purpose of the church as expressed in the bylaws and California law. Their suit specifically charged, among other things, that after becoming Rajneesh disciples, Gerhard and his wife "systematically and without cause began to deny membership in plaintiff CRSLB to former members and new applicants for membership who were not followers of defendant Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh." The complaint also argued that the sannyasins who had resigned from the board of trustees on September 3 were no longer

authorized to govern the church and that Amitabh was not a duly appointed church minister.

Says Barber: "I am not generally the type of person to stand up and be counted; I'm not an agitator or a firebrand. But I considered this to be theft of property." Barber would become the chief spokesperson for the old-line members in the media over the next few years.

The next day, October 6, the Rajneeshees filed suit against Barber, Lewis, and the old-line members suing them. The Rajneeshees' counterclaim demanded the return of $11,000 of church funds and asked damages for interference with church affairs and church property by Barber and the others.

A subsequent court order left the Rajneeshees in control of the property, but appointed a receiver to oversee the church's assets until the dispute was settled. The official Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach was reestablished at another location.

On September 14, the Chidvilas Rajneesh Meditation Center had applied in New Jersey to change its name to Rajneesh Foundation International. The name change was approved by the state of New Jersey on October 27. On November 23, Chidvilas applied for an amended certificate of authority in Oregon to do business in that state under its new name. Chidvilas had received its original certificate of authority from the state of Oregon on July 6; it was three weeks later, on July 25, that Chidvilas may or may not have applied in New Jersey to change its name to Rajneesh Foundation International.

The complaint filed by Barber, Lewis, and the old-line members against the Rajneeshees included the "Rajneesh Foundation, a California corporation," as defendant. All legal papers filed by Niren in the lawsuit, however, referred not to the Rajneesh Foundation but to the Rajneesh Foundation International (RFI). The Rajneeshees now claimed that the CRSLB property and assets had been donated to RFI (which did not exist at the time of the August 4 board of trustees meeting, when the vote was taken to make the donation).

At Thanksgiving time 1981, Ecke—as he had, at the September 3 special board meeting, facetiously predicted might happen—was "defrocked." Sushila, who had just returned from a fund-raising trip to Europe, called and asked him to come to the church for a meeting. When he got there he found

himself confronted by Sushila, Niren, Prem Sheela (who would be one of the main Rajneesh attorneys in the legal battles with Barber and the old-line members), and Nishant. He was informed that since he didn't approve of the idea of giving the CRSLB to the Bhagwan, he must return his mala and give up the name Sarveshwar.

Before the end of the year, Barber's membership in the Utsava-RMC was revoked.

On May 11, 1982, the Rajneesh Foundation in Berkeley filed papers with the state of California changing its name to Deepta Rajneesh Meditation Center.

IV. Scales of Justice

"I used to think that justice was the purpose of the legal system," Barber would say later. "My eyes were opened. I Justice is not for the poor. I didn't use to believe that—I thought that was the bellyaching of liberals.

"I thought the purpose of the legal system was to get the facts to the jury and judge so that they could make a logical, correct judgment. What it really is is a contest between two gladiators—the attorneys— to see how many of the damaging facts they can keep out, or put in. The truth is completely unimportant."

Things certainly did not go well for Barber and the old-line members in their legal battles with the Rajneeshees; Barber and the others would speak darkly and suspiciously of the fact that two of the three California Superior Court judges involved in the CRSLB-related cases were "midnight" Jerry Brown appointees, and that Swami Prem Niren's old law firm, Manatt, Phelps, Rothenberg, and Tunney, was politically influential in the state.

In October 1983, Orange County Superior Court Judge William Sheffield granted a motion for summary judgment by Rajneesh lawyers. Sheffield ruled that the RFI had nothing to do with the alleged conspiracy to take over the CRSLB. He also dismissed Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, the Rajneesh Investment Corporation, and the Rajneesh Neo-Sannyas International Commune in Oregon as defendants in the case.

In May 1984, Orange County Superior Court Judge Judith Ryan granted another Rajneesh motion for summary judgment. Ryan's ruling dismissed Ma Anand Sheela, Ma Yoga Sushila, and Swami Prem Niren as defendants. Ryan decreed that there was no evidence to show that Sheela and Sushila had any involvement in the affairs of the church and that Niren had acted only in his capacity as attorney.

Sheffield's and Ryan's rulings left fourteen defendants in the Religious Scientists' lawsuit against the Rajneeshees, including individual Rajneeshees, the Rajneesh board of trustees, and the Utsava Rajneesh Meditation Center. Ryan stipulated that these remaining defendants did not have to answer any pretrial questions pertaining to their financial affairs, nor did they need to give information about other organizations to which they belonged or were connected. Ryan had previously ruled that the Rajneesh board of trustees was the lawful board. She ruled subsequently that the CRSLB congregation had legally voted to break its ties with the United Church of Religious Science in 1978 when it approved the disaffiliation resolution.

There were basically two issues remaining in the case: whether the old-line CRSLB members had been wrongfully excluded from the church and whether CRSLB funds had been misappropriated. Ryan soon threw those claims out as well. She ruled that there were no issues of fact to be tried and that the Religious Scientists had no evidence at all to support their claims to title to the church.

Despite the fact that the majority of the rulings adverse to the Religious Scientists issued from Ryan, the chief attorney for the Religious Scientists, William Dougherty, would say that the turning point in the case was Judge Sheffield's ruling dismissing RFI as a defendant, because it undermined the Religious Scientists' central claim of a corporate conspiracy.

In October 1984, a jury considering the Rajneeshees' counterclaim against the Religious Scientists awarded a judgment of $26,000 in actual damages to the Rajneeshees, plus $1 in punitive damages.

The Religious Scientists would complain bitterly about the fact that the courts refused to consolidate the different summary judgments against them, forcing them, if they wanted to appeal, to appeal each one separately. They soon ran low on money and began thinking of dropping their legal action altogether.

In January 1982, Sarah T. was taken out of the Utsava office by the Rajneesh leadership and put to work in the church kitchen. “When all the legal stuff got to a peak, they decided that they needed a man in the office,” she says. “They wanted someone in there who was mean, and I couldn’t do that for them.”

In March, Sarah was sent to Europe to help Sushila raise money for the Oregon commune. She became Sushila’s personal assistant. That fall, in Germany, she became extremely ill, possibly from overwork. She had a bad kidney infection, her nerves were “shot,” and she was feverish. A Rajneesh doctor advised her to rest. Sushila, however, ordered her to get packed for another fund-raising trip, and even tried to roust her out of bed. The Rajneesh doctor refused to let her go, and instead took her to the German countryside for a rest.

“He was a sannyasin,” she says of the doctor, “but he had kept his own life. He wanted me to think for myself. And I had been discouraged from doing that for so long.... From the moment that I first saw Bhagwan, to the moment that I left, it was like I didn’t have a conscious thought of my own for four years.” She began thinking that she wanted to go home.

“To hell with it,” she thought to herself. “To hell with Sushila! I want to go home!”

She flew to Los Angeles, where she checked into a hotel room for a night. “It was the first time I had been alone in years,” she says, “and it just felt wonderful.” The next day she flew to her hometown. Her mother picked her up at the airport.

“When I saw my mother,” she remembers, “something real important happened to me. I realized—she was so full of love, and I thought—I hadn’t felt anything even faintly resembling what I was feeling for her in so long, I couldn’t even remember it. And it was like the contrast was so severe that it just—I just went over to the other side. And I was out; that was it.” She never returned to the Rajneesh cult. She would be one of the sources for the *Oregonian* investigative series about the Rajneeshees that ran in the summer of 1985.

Ma Yoga Sushila defected from the Rajneesh cult in 1984 and went into hiding, fearing for her life.

In November 1982, the Wasco County Court, in a two-to-one vote, gave the Rajneeshees permission to incorporate a city on Rancho Rajneesh. One of the commissioners voting in favor of the Rajneeshees, Rick Cantrell, who was strapped for money to pay off a bank note, was involved in a lucrative cattle deal with the Rajneeshees at the time of the vote. Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh was soon to apply for permanent-resident status in the United States.

That December, the environmentalist group 1000 Friends of Oregon filed suit against the impending incorporation, charging that it violated Oregon land-use laws. The Rajneeshees already had threatened to take over the town of Antelope if they could not get their way at the ranch. On April 15, 1982, the pre-Rajneesh residents of Antelope held an election to disincorporate the town to protect it from a potential Rajneesh takeover, but the Rajneeshees, who had moved large numbers of followers into the town just before election day, outvoted them. Rajneeshees at the ranch voted 154–0 the next month to incorporate the city of Rajneeshpuram.

Ma Anand Sheela strikes a typical pose during one of her combative press conferences.

At the time of the Antelope disincorporation vote, CBS's *60 Minutes* did a story on the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach, asking whether Rajneesh behavior there might be predictive of future events in Antelope. The Rajneeshees denied that it would. But in elections the next fall they took control of the Antelope City Council, and they would later take control of the Antelope school district as well.

In the summer of 1983, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh ordered all his sannyasins out of California to Rajneeshpuram, warning direly that disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and nuclear explosions were going to destroy the state. Sarah remembers thinking: "Just watch—they're going to close down everything but Utsava. Just watch—because it's worth so much money." And, in fact, the Rajneeshees did close down all their other centers in California, including Geetam, while a crew of disciples overseen by Swami Prem Amitabh continued to occupy the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach.

Some time later, Swami Prem Niren called Sarah and warned her that testimony by her in the CRSLB-related lawsuits could be "very damaging."

Swami Anand Somendra was excommunicated from the Rajneesh cult for being too independent of the Bhagwan. Somendra would be another source for the *Oregonian*'s investigative series in the summer of 1985. After leaving Pune, he did not go to live at the ranch in Oregon, but instead developed his own residential center in Europe, surrounded by his own "mediums" (women who dance in front of a spiritual "master" and transmit his energy to the audience). While visiting the ranch during the first annual international Rajneesh festival in the summer 1982, he was asked to attend a darshan with Rajneesh; he refused. His mala was taken away, and the next day Ma Anand Sheela and Ma Prem Arup announced that Somendra was "dead" and the other sannyasins were never to utter his name again.

Swami Prem Amitabh visited Rancho Rajneesh in Oregon November 16–20 in 1981. While he was at the ranch he met with the Bhagwan. He came back to Laguna Beach, in Sarah T.'s words, "really shaken." He told her: "Bhagwan is as crazy as a loon."

Amitabh wanted to live in the commune in Oregon. On instructions of the Rajneesh hierarchy, however, he remained as minister at the Laguna church until mid-1985, when he finally defected from the cult and resumed using his real name of Robert Birnbaum. After Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh gave a famous press conference on September 16, 1985, in which he denounced Ma Anand Sheela for crimes ranging from attempted murder to arson and accused her of turning his commune into a "fascist concentration camp," Birnbaum returned to Utsava to watch a videotape of the conference. He told an ex-sannyasin friend of his in northern California afterward: "I saw no light there at all. All I saw was a manipulator and shyster."

In February 1983, a group of six renegade Rajneesh disciples called the "Wild Geese," who had fled Rancho Rajneesh during the night in a truck, issued a circular denouncing the RFI for scheming to avoid taxes, arranging "marriages of convenience" between American and foreign disciples and "looking at possibilities of gaining control of counties in which Rajneeshpuram is located." The circular called upon RFI to return power in Antelope to its previous residents and to give back the Utsava Rajneesh Meditation Center to "its rightful owners." The circular warned metaphorically: "Rajneeshpuram is situated on an earthquake fault!"

In September 1984, the Rajneesh Humanity Trust (incorporated the previous spring) launched the "Share-A-Home" program, which imported thousands of homeless people from around the United States into Rajneeshpuram, allegedly for charitable purposes, but actually in order to register them to vote in the coming election, when two out of three of the members of the Wasco County Court (Commission) were up for reelection. The county court, following various higher court decisions, might have had to revisit the legitimacy of the incorporation of Rajneeshpuram and thus decide the fate of the city and the commune. A week before the Share-A-Home program began, two of three Wasco County commissioners on a visit to Rajneeshpuram became ill after drinking water offered to them by Ma Anand Sheela and given to them by Ma Anand Puja, the head of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation; a week after the program commenced, the largest per capita outbreak of salmonella food poisoning in the history of the United States began in The Dalles, the Wasco County seat and the town with the largest population concentration in the county.

These events turned out to be connected, components of a plot to take over the government of Wasco County, as the cult had previously taken control of the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach property (a control ratified by the legal system) and of the government of Antelope (a control also sanctioned by the legal system). This time, however, the Rajneesh takeover plot was foiled when the Oregon secretary of state set up a rigorous screening process for potential new voters trying to register in Wasco County just before the coming election, which discouraged the Rajneesh registration efforts.

In spring 1985, Henry Gerhard experienced a lethal recurrence of a stomach ailment and left Grass Valley to go to Rajneeshpuram to die. He became the first person to be cremated in Rajneeshpuram's recently completed open-air crematorium.

Also that spring, Helen C. Bryon, one of the Wild Geese living in Santa Fe, New Mexico, (also a significant source for the *Oregonian* investigative series) filed suit against Rajneesh corporations and officials, claiming that Ma Anand Sheela had defrauded her of money in India. In May 1985, a jury in a U.S. District Court in Portland awarded her $1.7 million. The property and assets of the Utsava Rajneesh Meditation Center in Laguna Beach, formerly the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach, were put up for collateral against the judgment pending an appeal.

On Saturday, September 14, 1985, Ma Anand Sheela and several other top Rajneesh officials left Rajneeshpuram for Europe. More Rajneesh officials left the ranch the next day. Swami Prem Niren became the mayor of Rajneeshpuram, replacing Swami Krishna Deva, who had resigned.

The next night, September 16, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh gave the famous press conference in which he accused Sheela of causing crimes such as the salmonella outbreak in The Dalles and the poisoning of the Wasco County commissioners, and of turning his commune into a "fascist concentration camp." Investigators who went into the commune in the following days and weeks found evidence of the largest private wiretapping system in the history of the United States and of two operative biological-warfare laboratories.

Reached in Grass Valley by *Oregon Magazine* shortly after the blowup at the commune, Jill Gerhard commented: "My master knows best. It is turning

out the best way not only for my master but for the sannyasins and the people of the world. I'm not surprised; I just take things as they come."

On October 28, after learning of a secret grand jury indictment of him for immigration law violations, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh attempted to flee the country to Bermuda, but was arrested by U.S. customs agents when his plane landed in Charlotte, North Carolina, to refuel. The following month, on November 14, he pleaded guilty of two of thirty-five counts of violating U.S. immigration law, was given a $400,000 fine and five years probation, and was ordered to leave the country in a plea bargain with federal authorities.

In February 1986, Ma Anand Sheela was extradited from West Germany back to Oregon. The following July, in a plea bargain with federal and state authorities, she pleaded guilty to federal charges of immigration fraud conspiracy, conspiracy to illegally intercept telephone conversations, and conspiracy to tamper with consumer products (a charge pertaining to the September 1984 salmonella poisoning in The Dalles), and to state charges of attempted murder, attempted poisoning, and first-degree arson. She was sentenced to four and a half years in jail on the federal charges and to twenty years on the state charges (she was expected to serve a total of two and a half years). However, she ended up serving about twenty-nine months in a California prison. Immediately after her release she was deported to Germany. She currently lives in Switzerland, married to a Swiss national, and therefore free from the threat of extradition or any new charges. She was tried by a Swiss court for conspiracy charges for the attempt to murder U.S. Attorney Charles Turner and sentenced to time already served. She is thus untouchable by any international warrants. She now runs two nursing homes in Switzerland.

Swami Krishna Deva reassumed his old name of David Knapp, turned state's evidence and was put in the federal witness protection program. Despite his cooperation with authorities, he was sentenced to two years in jail for violating immigration law. (He had been involved in the salmonella poisoning in The Dalles but received no sentence in connection with that crime.)

Swami Prem Niren also took back his former name, Philip Toelkes. After his truncated reign as Rajneeshpuram mayor (the commune quickly disbanded after Rajneesh's departure, and the city was declared illegal for violating constitutional guarantees of separation of church and state), he repaired to

Mill Valley, California, where he took up residence with Ma Prem Sunshine, a former public relations assistant to Ma Prem Isabel, chief of public relations at Rajneeshpuram during its heyday and a Chilean national who was Toelkes's legal wife at the time. In California he founded the Institute for Justice and Human Rights whose stated purpose was to clear Rajneesh's name of all charges levied against him in the 1980s. During his attempts to clear Rajneesh's name, Toelkes accused U.S. Attorney Charles Turner of misusing his office in order to attack Rajneesh. Toelkes also claimed that while Rajneesh was in jail, he was poisoned by U.S. officials and the result of this mistreatment was Rajneesh's physical deterioration and ultimate death. Toelkes continues to practice law in California.

On August 25, 1986, the Utsava Rajneesh Meditation Center—formerly the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach—was sold for $900,000 to a couple who planned to start a day-care center on the property. It was revealed that, earlier in the year, Larry Barber and the other Religious Scientists who had filed suit against the Rajneeshees reached a settlement with them whereby they agreed to pay the Rajneeshees more than $20,000 and to withdraw all future claims against the property, and the Rajneeshees agreed to drop all claims against them. Barber and another Religious Scientist had to dip into their personal savings to help pay the settlement.

"We had to make a deal with them," Barber was quoted as saying by the Orange County *Register*. "After five years of hassling in the courts, and seeing that the courts were not listening to what we had to say, we ran out of money."

1986

Afterword

How Close Was Disaster?

Ma Anand Sheela was extradited from West Germany in February 1986. The following July, in a plea bargain with federal and Oregon authorities, she pleaded guilty to federal charges of conspiring to commit immigration fraud, conspiring to illegally intercept telephone conversations at Rancho Rajneesh, and conspiring to tamper with consumer products (a charge relating to the September 1984 salmonella outbreak in The Dalles). She also pleaded guilty to state charges of the attempted murder of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's doctor, Swami Devaraj; attempted poisonings of Wasco County Court commissioners Ray Matthews and William Hulse in September 1984; and first-degree arson in a January 1985 fire at the Wasco County Planning Office. She was sentenced to four and a half years in jail on the federal charges and twenty years on the state charges, and was ordered by U.S. District Judge Edward Leavy to leave the country immediately upon her release from jail (estimated to be in about four years under state and federal parole guidelines). Ma Anand Puja, former head of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation, also pleaded guilty to most of the same charges and received a similar sentencing. Ma Shanti Bhadra, former treasurer of the Rajneesh Foundation International and vice president of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation, pleaded guilty to the attempted murder of Devaraj and was given ten years, of which she was expected to serve two and a half. That December, David Knapp (formerly Swami Krishna Deva, mayor of Rajneeshpuram), was given a two-year sentence for immigration-law violations by Judge Leavy— despite Knapp's key role as ex post facto

informant for the authorities. Other Rajneeshees involved in various of these criminal violations were given probation.

The guilty pleas of Sheela, Puja, and Bhadra "largely conclude a disturbing and traumatic chapter in Oregon history . . . and bring to light the truth in a series of events that were previously clouded with rumors, speculation and denial," pronounced Oregon Attorney General David Frohnmayer. Then, on August 15, Frohnmayer announced the conclusion of a settlement between the state of Oregon and various Rajneesh corporations whereby the corporations would financially recompense the state and victims of the 1984 salmonella poisoning. The settlement agreement called for payments to the state for attorney's fees and investigative costs associated with Rajneesh matters, to restaurants in The Dalles that had filed suit against the Rajneeshees over the salmonella poisoning, and to a relief fund for individual victims of the poisoning. No monies were allocated to victims of Rajneesh harassment in Antelope. The amount available for the victims' relief fund was tied to the ultimate sale price of Rancho Rajneesh. Frohnmayer called the settlement "the end of the Rajneesh story in Oregon."

On December 10, 1985, a little over a month after Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's departure from Oregon and the United States, U.S. District Judge Helen J. Frye, in the lawsuit brought by Frohnmayer against Rajneeshpuram's incorporation, ruled that the city's incorporation did violate constitutional guarantees of separation of church and state and was invalid. As a condition of the August 15, 1986, settlement, the Rajneeshees agreed to withdraw their appeal of Frye's ruling. A week before, on August 6, the Oregon Court of Appeals—while rejecting the argument of 1000 Friends of Oregon that the formation of a city on agricultural land necessarily violated state land-use laws—had ruled the incorporation of Rajneeshpuram invalid because then–Wasco County Court Commissioner Rick Cantrell had failed to disclose his business dealings with the Rajneeshees prior to the commission's vote on the issue in November 1981.

Meanwhile, even as four of his former top assistants languished in jail in the United States, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh enjoyed the life of a free and wealthy man, issuing new discourses from India to his remaining disciples around the globe. In 1986, Rajneesh embarked on a worldwide tour that took him to such disparate places as Nepal, Greece, and Uruguay, and eventually —after being denied permission to settle in any of these countries and even

to enter numerous others—back to India. In early January 1987 he returned to the Pune (Poona) ashram he had abandoned five and a half years before.

On July 13, 1986, a memorial bronze statue of an antelope was dedicated on the grounds of the Wasco County Courthouse. A marker on the statue's pedestal reads: "Dedicated to all who steadfastly and unwaveringly opposed the attempts of the Rajneesh followers to take political control of Wasco County, 1981–85." On the same day, a memorial flagpole was dedicated in the town of Antelope. A bronze plaque at the base of the pole reads: "Dedicated to those of this community who throughout the Rajneesh invasion and occupation of 1981–85 remained, resisted and remembered. . . . 'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing' (Edmund Burke)."

In 1978, the Rajneesh Foundation in India attempted to purchase a small valley near Saswed, a town some forty-five minutes from the Rajneesh ashram in Pune, for a new commune. The purchase was blocked by the government. The foundation did, however, succeed a year later in renting a 40,000-square-foot, sixteenth-century castle in Saswed belonging to two brothers, Sursinh and Amarsinh Jadhavrao. The foundation leased the castle, a stable, and two wells from the brothers, who maintained the rights to cultivate the adjacent agricultural land.

Some 250 Rajneesh disciples soon moved to the castle from the overcrowded ashram in Pune and established several enterprises, including a soap factory and a mala manufacturing operation. The disciples found that there was not enough water from the two leased wells to supply their needs. Claiming the Jadhavraos had misrepresented the water situation to them, the disciples commandeered two other wells on the property and installed pumps and a 3,000 foot pipeline to the castle. This diversion of additional water to the castle resulted in damage to the Jadhavraos' crops. The Jadhavraos asked the Rajneesh Foundation to remove the pumps. Rajneesh spokeswoman Ma Anand Sheela refused, saying: "If you try to obstruct us, blood will mix with water." When the Jadhavraos then demanded that the Rajneesh disciples vacate the castle altogether, Sheela told them: "We will not vacate the castle and if at all we have to vacate it, we will blow it up."

On May 24, 1981, a representative of the Rajneesh Foundation contacted Amarsinh Jadhavrao and indicated a desire to negotiate a settlement to their

dispute. He said that he would send a sannyasin to speak with Amarsinh at his residence. According to a complaint lodged in 1982 against the foundation and several Rajneesh disciples by Amarsinh's lawyer, charging them with sexual entrapment, criminal libel, and malicious prosecution, events transpired as follows:

"At about 8:30 PM on the same day, one sannyasin, i.e. No. 3 of you, approached my client at his residence at Laxmi Road. No. 3 of you [a Ma Prem Gatha] told my client that she had forgotten to bring a letter from the ashram. No. 3 of you requested my client to come to 39 Koregaon Park [the address of the Rajneesh ashram] for settlements of disputes regarding rent etc. As my client was used to going to the Rajneesh Ashram a number of times, my client accepted the request of No. 3 of you. My client then took his Fiat car for going to 35 Koregaon Park.

"No. 3 of you also accompanied my client in the said car. My client and No. 3 of you went to 36 Koregaon Park. No. 3 of you requested my client to park the car, which my client immediately did. No. 3 of you told my client that she would inform Ma Sheela about my client's arrival. No. 3 of you got down from the car and started crying loudly. It appeared to be a small part of a big plan, well thought out by you. Twenty to twenty-five sannyasins who were on the spot more by way of plan than by accident started giving threats [to] my client. At the same time, No. 4 of you [i.e., Sheela Silverman] accompanied by two armed sannyasins came on the scene. No. 4 of you threatened my client with dire consequences in case my client refused to sign some documents. No. 4 of you also threatened my client that she would call for police in order to trap my client.

"My client, however, was very tough and refused to sign any documents. No. 4 of you directed the armed sannyasins to kill my client if my client attempted to run away from the scene. No. 4 of you then left the premises. My client then realized that there was a serious danger to the life of my client. My client was helpless, unaccompanied by anyone. My client was sitting in the car that was surrounded by armed sannyasins with aggressive intentions.

"My client, however, maintained the presence of his mind. My client found one opportune moment and desperately started his car. One sannyasin immediately jumped on the bonnet of my client's car. My client, however, continued to drive his car with a view to protect his life. When my client refused to stop his car, said sannyasin jumped down. However, one negro

sannyasin started pursuing and chasing my client with the help of his motorcycle. The said negro sannyasin chased my client from 35 Koregaon Park up the Engineering College of Pune. On that day, my client would have been definitely killed had he not kept the presence of his mind."

In an article in the German magazine *Stern* in 1978, a woman named Eva Renzi described her experiences in a Rajneesh encounter therapy group.

"In the room were eighteen people," she began. "I only knew Jan, a fifty-year-old Dutchman. The leader sat down, after he had closed the thick sound-proofed door. Suddenly a woman hurled herself at another and screamed at her: 'You make me sick. You are a vampire. I want to scratch your face, you filthy thing.' She beat her. . . . Meanwhile two women and a young man had got up. The young man threw himself on a girl of about eighteen, pulled her up, and boxed her on the ears with the words: 'You are a caricature of a madonna. You think you're better than us, don't you. You are the worst person here.' And then, pointing at me, he said, 'Together with you, you bitch. You've got it coming to you, too.' The girl's nose was running with blood. She tried desperately to protect herself against the blows. Then the leader took charge. He said: 'You probably think that you have control over things. You have not even got control over yourself. You are under total control here.'"

According to her *Stern* article, Renzi was assigned by the group leader to spend the night with the Dutchman Jan. However, according to her account, after eating dinner she went quickly to sleep.

"Next day," she went on in the article, "I appeared for the group punctually. I said a friendly 'good morning,' and icy silence answered me. I sat down. The leader asked what had happened in the previous twenty four hours. Then Jan sprang up, pulled me up, and began uninhibitedly beating me. 'You whore,' he shouted, 'you have humiliated me, you cursed woman, I'll kill you.' I was horrified. My nose began to bleed. I shouted: 'This is your problem, if your masculine pride is hurt.' He beat me further. He tore my blouse and threw me to the floor. Like someone possessed he sat on me, beat me with his fists on my head, choked my neck, and shouted: 'Say the truth, you piece of filth.'

"'What truth? Are you out of your mind, are you hypnotized?' I shouted. Suddenly he left me. . . . I got up trembling, trying to stop my bleeding nose.

‘Is this a center for developing a crazy masculinity?’ I asked. I thought the craziness had passed, and would go. Then first of all a man dived on me. ‘Exactly that,’ he said. What do you think we’re here for?’ Then two women grabbed me, and finally the whole group.

“What happened next was like an evil dream,” Renzi continued. “They shouted: ‘Fight with us, you coward. Will you play holy in here, you whore?’ I fled from one corner to another. They punched, scratched, and kicked me, and pulled my hair. They tore my blouse and pants off my body. I was stark naked, and they were so surrendered to their madness, that I was filled with death-anxiety. My one thought: to stay conscious. I screamed: ‘Let me go. I want to get out of here.’ At a signal from the leader they let me go.”

Renzi concluded her account for the German public of Rajneesh group therapy techniques by asking: “This craziness garnished with sadism, this fanaticism with world-beating claims, had I not already heard it somewhere before?”

According to testimony included in an affidavit presented by Oregon State Police Lieutenant Dean Renfrow to the Jefferson County District Court on October 1, 1985, to obtain a warrant to search certain premises at Rajneeshpuram, the following books were in the possession of members of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation prior to the unraveling of the commune: *Handbook for Poisoning, How To Kill, Deadly Substances, The Perfect Crime and How To Commit It*, and *Let Me Die Before I Wake.* According to the affidavit, investigators sent to Rancho Rajneesh also found the following items: “A photocopy of an article entitled ‘Poison Investigation,’ with sections on symptoms highlighted, and a clear plastic bag with articles on infectious diseases, chemical products, and chemical and biological warfare. The articles also included several publications on assassinations, explosives, terrorism, and related matters.”

The affidavit also contains this description of an apparent biological-warfare laboratory at Rajneeshpuram: “The locks to the doors had been changed, with the old locks still in the room; the windows were covered from the inside, the carpet was covered with linoleum; a waste basket had been burned; the fire extinguisher was much larger than the standard ones in the cabins; there were uniforms in the cupboards, and there was a box of brand-new gas masks.”

Renfrow's affidavit makes clear that there is ample evidence implicating members of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation and other individual Rajneeshees in the most frightening of crimes and criminal plots, including the waging of biological warfare against the people of The Dalles through the spreading of salmonella in the town's restaurants and an attempted poisoning of its water supply, the poisoning of Jefferson County District Attorney Mike Sullivan and Wasco County Court Commissioner William Hulse and attempted poisonings of Rajneesh disciples who were out of favor with top commune officials, and the drugging of street people brought to the commune in the fall of 1984 by the Share-A-Home program, as well as the drugging of a number of Rajneesh disciples.

Separately from Renfrow's affidavit and subsequent investigation, federal investigators reportedly received allegations from a Rajneesh disciple who turned state's evidence that top Rajneesh leaders, led by Ma Anand Sheela, had compiled a hit list of government officials whom they planned to kill—and had taken preliminary measures, including the purchase of guns and the staking out of one official's house, to carry out their assassination scheme.

It is clear from the historical record that tendencies to violence within the Rajneesh cult go back a long time, at least to the Rajneesh encounter groups of the seventies, and are a product of Rajneesh's own psychology and temperament. It was Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh himself who justified the use of violence in these groups in a speech called "This Is Not a Democracy." "I only send people to the encounter group," Rajneesh explained, "when I know that they are ready to go beyond all boundaries, boundaries of violence, anger, sex, rage. They have to break all boundaries." And Rajneesh emphasized in the same speech: "Whatsoever happens here [in his commune] is perfectly known to me, is happening according to me."

In his book about Rajneesh, *The Golden Guru,* psychiatrist-author James S. Gordon says that he was told by Major Moine of the Oregon state police that Rajneeshpuram security forces planned, in the event of an attempt to arrest Rajneesh at the ranch, to protect the guru with a "human wall" of sannyasin women and children and shoot the arresting officers. Gordon (an admirer of Rajneesh, as can be deduced from the title of his book) reports that Moine challenged him: "Do you think he [Rajneesh] didn't know?"

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh predicted that two-thirds of the world's population would die of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). The

Renfrow affidavit contains information relating to a secret research project into the disease that was being conducted by the Rajneesh Medical Corporation—a project involving, among other things, an attempt to grow a live AIDS culture. The project's secret code name was "Moses Five."

An editorial in the November 27, 1985, issue of the Eugene *Register-Guard* opined: "Oregon's government officials, to their credit, resisted the temptation to exploit people's passions. Some Oregonians will say that the state should have moved against the Rajneeshees sooner, but official action was guided by the law and not by public opinion. That approach has now been vindicated."

Has it been? Or was it merely by a stroke of good fortune or sheer accident that the state of Oregon, and perhaps the world at large, escaped disaster at the hands of a deranged cult?

Win McCormack, 1986

Appendixes

Appendix 1: The Anti-Semitism Letters

August 9, 1983

Win McCormack, Editor
Oregon Magazine
208 SW Stark, Suite 500
Portland, OR 97204

Beloved Mr. McCormack,

The two thoroughly distasteful and nasty articles published by your magazine this month ("Bhagwan's Jewish Problem" and "Last Year at Rajneeshpuram?") represent a clear change in your attitude towards the Rajneesh community. You have decided to abandon any pretense of objectivity, balance or fairness, and "go for the jugular." In doing so, you have parted company with the *Oregonian* and other reputable publications in this state, and joined forces with such weighty intellectual journals as The Dalles *Weekly Reminder.*

As a Jew, I rate your suggestion that Bhagwan "appears to justify" the slaughter of my ethnic group by Adolf Hitler as one of the most revolting, malicious, and unfounded accusations ever made against Bhagwan and his disciples.

You have missed the point entirely—and, I believe, deliberately. You are trying to incite the Jewish community in Portland to take a political stand against the Rajneeshees by branding Bhagwan "anti-Semitic."

If a compassionate spiritual master like Bhagwan sees the suffering and guilt which his Jewish disciples are carrying as part of their cultural heritage, do you think he points it out so that others can sneer at them?

Bhagwan is a doctor, a surgeon. He heals wounds that no surgeon's knife, no psychologist's couch, can ever reach. Your article is like blaming a surgeon for the cancer he seeks to excise.

For example, there is a Jew here, known to me personally, who used to wake up each morning with the smell of burning flesh in his nostrils, long after that personal horror was over. A survivor of the Nazi death camps, his

life was a torment until he met Bhagwan. Only now is he free from the horrors of his own memories . . . and you dare to imply, for the sake of a cheap shot at the Rajneeshees, that Bhagwan justifies the Holocaust? Bhagwan is the cure, he is the remedy, and you want to turn him into a Nazi? For shame. It is you who is *[sic]* exploiting people, not Bhagwan. You are trying to make us appear anti-Semitic because you have decided to join those who want the Rajneeshees out of Oregon. This is perfectly clear from your Editor's Notes ("Last Year at Rajneeshpuram?") in which you predict that the unity within the Rajneesh community will soon splinter and that will be the end of us.

One more thing. Bhagwan has told jokes about Poles, Italians, Germans, Blacks, Gays, Hippies, Irishmen—all kinds of people. No one has ever accused him of being "anti-Polish" or "anti-Italian." But as soon as he tells a joke about Jews, the cry goes up, "anti-Semitic!"

Jokes are an indispensable antidote against the disease of seriousness which Bhagwan teaches us to avoid. Loving laughter, not sensationalized and covert hatred, is the way to a world where all races, religions, and nations can live in peace.

With love,
Swami Krishna Deva
Mayor, City of Rajneeshpuram

P.S. Why do Jews have long noses? Because the air is free.

September 29, 1983

Mr. Robert Krueger
District Director
U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service
511 NW Broadway
Portland, Oregon

Re: Application of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

Dear Mr. Krueger:

I am writing to express my opinion that to seriously consider the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's application to remain in this country on a third-preference category allegation would be a grave travesty of justice.

The Bhagwan is an unabashed anti-Semite (please see the enclosed copy of an article in August's *Oregon Magazine).* To view his application with favor would be an affront to every person, Jew or non-Jew, who is concerned with anti-Semitism, and would make a mockery of the immigration laws. The continued presence in this country of an anti-Semite who cloaks his views in religious garb can in no way benefit "the national economy, cultural interests, or welfare of the United States"; it can only do damage to those interests.

Very truly yours,
Rose & Stern
Kenneth S. Stern

cc: Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh
Rajneeshpuram, Oregon

October 31, 1983

Mr. Kenneth S. Stern
Kellogg Building, Suite 101
1935 SE Washington
Milwaukie, OR 97222

Dear Mr. Stern:

As a fellow member of the Oregon Bar, and as an individual with thirty-eight years of Jewish heritage, I am appalled by your letter to Robert Krueger of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Services.

I have never had any doubt that the media could distort information and convince a substantial portion of its audience that these distortions were in fact the truth. What concerns me greatly is that an individual such as yourself should take the obviously biased reporting of the *Oregon Magazine* as the

truth and use that distorted piece of journalism as a basis for requesting the denial of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's application with the INS.

I am amazed that you have not attempted to check this matter out more thoroughly with individuals close to the heart of the matter— Rajneeshees themselves. If you had, you would have discovered that over a third of the 1,200 residents of Rajneeshpuram are of a Jewish heritage. You would have discovered that the mayor of the City of Rajneeshpuram and the city planner are both Jews. You would have discovered that two members of the bar, including myself, are Jewish, and that the late husband of Ma Anand Sheela was also a Jew.

The article you supplied to the INS totally distorted quotations from the Bhagwan's book *The Mustard Seed.* I advise you to read that book and see the full perspective, rather than relying on the magazine article which contains such distortions.

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh has lectured for over twenty years. Approximately 350 books have been published containing those lectures. These works contain statements regarding all religions and peoples, including Jews. If you were to read an actual lecture given by Bhagwan, you would find that he teaches that true religiousness is beautiful. He uses humor and anecdotal material throughout his disclosures in a way that succinctly presents his teachings. If you chose to read further, you would find that Bhagwan loves all people, and makes no distinction between races or religions.

I am certain you will never find a single incident where Bhagwan has ever discriminated against anyone, regardless of race, creed, color, or sexual preference. Bhagwan has seen and spoken to hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world in his years as a spiritual master.

It is most unfortunate that you have chosen the *Oregon Magazine* as the final word in this matter. Perhaps this letter will be the impetus for a discovery of the *real* story.

Very truly yours,

Swami Prartho Subhan

November 8, 1983

Mr. Robert Krueger
District Director
U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service
511 NW Broadway
Portland, Oregon

Re: Application of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

Dear Mr. Krueger:

On September 29, 1983, I wrote you expressing my opinion that Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's third-preference category application be denied on the basis of his anti-Semitism. I enclosed with that letter a copy of the article from *Oregon Magazine* (see enclosure). That article collected some of the anti-Semitic statements of the Bhagwan and his agents.

On November 3, 1983, I received a letter dated October 31, 1983, from Swami Prartho Subhan, Attorney at Law. It responds to the letter I sent you on September 29, 1983. I did not send a copy of my letter to Swami Prartho Subhan, but did do so to Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Swami Prartho Subhan does not indicate whether he speaks only for himself, or whether he acts as an attorney for Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh.

In his letter (enclosed), Swami Prartho Subhan objects to the *Oregon Magazine*'s article as containing "distorted quotations" from *The Mustard Seed*. He does not state how these quotations were distorted, however. Additionally, he does not contend that the quote itself is inaccurate. Indeed, he does not question the accuracy of the other quotes or the assertions in the article.

This lack of response is not in the least bit surprising, as his letter assumes the accuracy of those other allegations, and clearly demonstrates that he does not consider those remarks to be anti-Semitic.

Although Swami Prartho Subhan's letter does lack precision of reference, it seems to refer to the terribly offensive material as "humor and anecdotal material." Only an anti-Semite would refer to statements about Jews tasting worse than excrement as "humor." Only an anti-Semite would indulge in gas chamber "humor." Only an especially dangerous anti-Semite would consider such statements as not only nondefamatory, but excellent teaching technique. Only an especially dangerous anti-Semite could attempt to justify such anti-

Semitic statements and at the same time deny ever discriminating against anyone.

Swami Prartho Subhan's letter has only served to heighten my awareness of the danger Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh poses to Jewish people and all others who suffer when racism is not only openly condoned, but is applauded as a tool for enlightenment.

Very truly yours,
Rose & Stern
Kenneth S. Stern

cc: Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh
Swami Prartho Subhan

Appendix 2: The Town That Was Poisoned

Congressional Record—House
Thursday, February 28, 1985
99th Cong., 1st Sess.
131 Cong Rec H 901
REFERENCE: Vol. 131 No. 23
TITLE: THE TOWN THAT WAS POISONED
SPEAKER: Mr. WEAVER

TEXT: The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon [Mr. Weaver] is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. WEAVER. Mr. Speaker, I have a strange and terrifying tale to tell the House. It is about a town that was poisoned. This town has a population of 10,000. When the poison struck, over 700 were taken violently ill. There were, in fact, 715 confirmed cases of poisoning. Another 117 had severe symptoms. Over 45 hospitalized. A pregnant woman and her husband were poisoned; her baby born soon after had the effects of the poison. Fortunately, no one died.

The poisoning was investigated thoroughly by county, State and Federal health authorities. The investigation pointed directly to the food from salad bars in eight restaurants in the town. Another two restaurants without salad bars were implicated, although fewer cases from these two restaurants were reported. The poisoning occurred in two waves in September of 1984, with an astronomical 450 cases reported on the weekend of September 23.

The poison was salmonella typhimurium. The town was The Dalles, OR. To dramatize for you how unusual this outbreak of poisoning was, let me cite some figures:

The Dalles has not had a single case of reported Salmonella poisoning since 1978. Before 1978, only one or two cases a year were reported.

The entire State of Oregon has reported salmonella cases ranging from 250 to 400 a year. The Dalles outbreak had 715.

Figures from the Federal Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, GA, for the entire country for the years 1979, 1980 and 1981 show only one outbreak

of Salmonella larger than that in The Dalles, and that of 1,200 cases stemming from pork eaten at a festival in Georgia. The CDC figures include only those outbreaks investigated by the CDC. Most of the outbreaks listed by the CDC run about 20, with the range between 10 and 200. There are an average of 40,000 cases of reported salmonella in the United States each year. The small town of The Dalles had about 2 percent of such cases in 1 year.

Most significant of all—highly significant—The Dalles outbreak did not come from one food source from one site nor did it occur at one time. The sources of The Dalles outbreak were eight salad bars. And the outbreak came in waves.

Salmonella is not easy to catch, like the common cold or flu. It is difficult to pass from one person to another in ordinary encounters. It almost always occurs from eating food that has been contaminated, improperly cooked, or left out of the refrigerator too long. Salmonella feeds on protein and usually occurs in meat, poultry, eggs, fish, milk or cheese. Not green lettuce salad.

Salmonella typhimurium is one of the most common types of salmonella. It can cause typhoid fever in mice. In humans, it is extremely discomforting and can be dangerous (it can kill, but most often does not). Salmonella does not like the acid in our stomachs but it thrives in our intestines where it erupts and causes diarrhea, fever, chills, headache, nausea, vomiting, fainting, hematochezia and abdominal cramps. It is a bacteria that can grow at room temperature but reproduces at a most rapid rate at body temperature.

Let me now relate to you the horror-ridden story of the town that was poisoned. The Dalles is the county seat of Wasco County, OR. It is situated on the Columbia River about 60 miles east of Portland. It is a farm town, surrounded by orchards, with wheat and cattle ranches in the dry southern reaches of the county. The big aluminum smelter in The Dalles was recently closed. Directly across the river is the State of Washington. It is a quiet, conservative town.

On September 17, the Wasco County Health Department received a call from a person who complained of gastroenteritis after eating in a popular restaurant in The Dalles. In the next 4 days the local health authorities received at least 20 more complaints involving two restaurants. On September 21, salmonella typhimurium was isolated from a stool sample of one of these restaurant patrons. The resultant publicity in the local news

media caused hundreds of others to report their illness. State health investigators were called in and the Federal Centers for Disease Control were contacted and asked to participate. A full-scale investigation was on.

The health authorities interviewed and checked the hundreds of people who complained of salmonella symptoms; and they interviewed and checked hundreds who did not. The statistics began to show that those who had eaten at salad bars in eight restaurants were far more likely to have become infected; in fact, the salad bars seemed the only common denominator. Few of those who had not eaten at the salad bars suffered from the illness. With that lead, the Food and Drug Administration investigators and other officials began checking the sources of supply for the salad bars.

They found no common source for any of the food articles on the various salad bars. The lettuce came from different suppliers, as did the other vegetables. The salad dressings were from different wholesalers. Each item was traced back, some even to the growers. The puzzled investigators even checked the kale that was used decoratively on one salad bar. A shipment of cantaloupe from a farm across the river in Washington State was suspected but nothing was discovered.

There were no other similar outbreaks of salmonella in other communities either in the vicinity of The Dalles or, for that matter, in all of Oregon or Washington. I think that bears repeating. This huge outbreak of salmonella was isolated in one town, and it had no common food source. Indeed, the outbreak had no common site. It sprang up and then erupted simultaneously from eight different restaurants and from the salad bars of those restaurants.

Even so, both water systems serving The Dalles were thoroughly checked and no evidence of salmonella was found.

The food handlers were suspected. Most of the perplexed health authorities involved in the investigation continue to believe that in some way, somehow—no one knows how—the food handlers were the cause. Almost all of the 325 food handlers employed in the 10 restaurants were interviewed and later interviewed again. About 100 had been infected. The 26 food handlers who showed positive salmonella culture in their stools denied having been ill. I can understand the health officials turning to the food handlers as the source; there is no other place to look. Everything else has been investigated and nothing found.

But the food handlers came down with salmonella poisoning at the same times the patrons of the restaurants did. One or two handlers came down a day or two before patrons became ill in one or two restaurants, but the figures are imprecise. And at one restaurant the patrons became ill before the food handlers.

And no one has been able to discover how all the food handlers got salmonella in the first place. There were food handlers in almost all the restaurants who became ill about the same time. How did all of them happen to get salmonella? They were the victims of the poisoning just like the patrons. They ate at their restaurants, and they were poisoned too.

And why was it only the salad bars which were almost the entire sources of the poisoning?

As an incubator, raw vegetables are not ideal for salmonella. Salmonella feeds on protein. Health authorities can remember only one instance of an epidemic arising from a vegetable, some sewage-contaminated celery back in 1974. But records list few other instances not occurring in protein sources. So salad, lettuce salad, would be a most unlikely source for any salmonella development, certainly not one that poisoned 715 people. Yet no statistical evidence could be found to implicate other foods more commonly associated with salmonella. In one restaurant involved in the first wave 49 patrons of the period September 11 to 15 were interviewed. Seven reported becoming ill within 1 week after they had eaten there. All seven had partaken of the salad bar; but only 17 of the 42 who denied being ill had eaten salad. And two heads of lettuce from that restaurant were analyzed and no salmonella was found.

Actually there were a number of suggested sources of the salmonella. In one restaurant, people who ate the lettuce were unaffected but the macaroni and potato salads at the salad bar apparently were contaminated. In another restaurant, salmonella was found in the blue-cheese dressing, but none in the mix used to make the dressing, pointing to contamination in the restaurant during preparation; or after preparation. The fruit garnish in one restaurant was associated with the poisoning. And two restaurants which had no salad bars were implicated, though with few confirmed cases.

The first wave of the outbreak occurred on September 10 and 15 percent of the cases emanated from a 3-day period; it was the second wave that was explosive, and just like an explosion, it hit hard and was quickly over; but

about 600 confirmed cases of salmonella poisoning occurred in that terrifying second wave which began September 21 and ended a few days later.

The epidemic in The Dalles is one of the largest outbreaks of salmonella poisoning in our history for the size of the population in which it occurred. A proportional outbreak in Los Angeles would have 350,000 people ill! If there had been one source, hot dogs at a high-school football game, chicken at a big country barbecue, then it would have been explainable though most unusual. But there was not a single source. All evidence pointed to contamination on the premises of the eight restaurants.

But the natural place to find salmonella—poultry, eggs, milk, meat, fish—were never implicated. The interviews of affected persons never traced back to such foods; if food handlers had infected salad bars, why had they not infected the more likely foods? Of course food handlers came down with salmonella in larger numbers than the rest of the population: almost all of them ate in the restaurants they worked in. And they were investigated far more intensely than the general population.

But one startling fact sends all this conjecture spinning.

One restaurant, the Portage Inn (which was one of the first two restaurants implicated) had banquet facilities and frequent large private banquets were given there. These banquets had salad bars all of their own in their private banquet room; the same foods and dressings were provided the banquets as the regular salad bar in the main restaurant. The same food handlers prepared and served the food, including salad bars, for the banquets as for the main restaurant.

But no person who ate at the restaurant only as a banquet patron came down with salmonella.

Let me repeat that. Banquet guests in the private banquet room, eating from a salad bar prepared by the same food handlers who prepared the salad bar in the main restaurant, and serving the same food as the main restaurant salad bar, did not come down with salmonella while patrons of the main restaurant at the same times did come down with salmonella. In large numbers.

If, during the periods of the outbreaks, you had turkey or a ham sandwich, you did not get salmonella. Hundreds of people who ate at the salad bars did. If you had a pizza from Shakey's or Pietro's, you did not get salmonella. But

if you ate at their salad bars you had a good chance—dozens did—of coming down with salmonella. If you ate salad at a banquet at the Portage Inn you did not get salmonella poisoning. But if you ate at the salad bar in the main restaurant you had a very good chance of severe illness. If you were an employee of one of the implicated restaurants you had a very good chance of getting salmonella infection. But even the health authorities who assumed that the food handlers were the cause could find no evidence of any kind to determine how the food handlers got salmonella in the first place. Except by eating at the salad bars.

Consider the outbreak. Eight salad bars in one small town within a 2-week period were the primary source of 715 confirmed cases of salmonella. Indeed, in the second wave when, within a few days, about 600 people were poisoned, the salad bars accounted—according to the best statistical evidence—for most of the infections. Then consider that there are about 50,000 salad bars in restaurants in the United States, according to the National Restaurant Association, and none of them have been pinpointed as the cause of any salmonella outbreaks. They all have food handlers just as likely or unlikely to contract and pass on salmonella as the food handlers in The Dalles. But only eight salad bars in the United States—out of those 50,000—caused one of the largest eruptions of salmonella in our history. All in one small town within a 2-week period.

The Dalles is not in my congressional district but it is a town I particularly like. When I first read of the salmonella outbreak and the investigation it appeared so strange I became most interested. I talked with the health authorities involved in the investigation almost daily. I poured over the statistics as I received them. I analyzed them thoroughly. I rechecked my facts with the authorities. I talked with other people in The Dalles, including several of the restaurant managers. I came to the conclusion that the town had been poisoned.

I have nothing but the highest commendations for the health authorities involved. They were courteous and patient. They were extremely careful and thorough. They never violated confidences and I was given, by them, only statistical data and no names.

Their feeling—that the food handlers are the cause—is understandable. I believe they can point to nothing else. For there is no direct, concrete evidence that the salad bars were deliberately contaminated. It is not [the]

job of the health authorities to postulate answers from circumstantial evidence. Because I believe the crime is so horrendous, and the dangers so great, I believe it is my job to do so.

Let me repeat. There is no direct, concrete evidence of deliberate sabotage of the food in The Dalles. But the circumstances are so overwhelming in pointing to such deliberate contamination that—though I have agonized over the decision—I can only conclude, and very positively conclude, that sabotage did take place.

Is it possible to use salmonella for mass poisoning? It certainly is. Salmonella is quite easy to culture. Under the right conditions it grows quite rapidly. It can be transported easily in liquid. However, culturing salmonella and storing it and determining the proper mix for transporting it would best be done by a medical laboratory with trained lab technicians.

If one wanted to undertake a mass poisoning with salmonella, where would one go? The obvious places, where a customer of a restaurant comes in contact naturally and without suspicion with the food many of the other patrons will eat: the salad bars. A small vial of salmonella culture could be used to sprinkle the liquid in the salad dressings or salad mixes or on the lettuce or other foods on the salad bar as one helped themselves.

Who would do such a terrifying thing? Who would poison a whole town; or at least 715 of its citizens? Whoever did could not have known how many people they would poison, or whether someone might die from the poisoning. But the massive assault on the people of The Dalles was that: a massive assault, almost a war on the town. Who would want to do it? And who would have the capability to do it?

Is there a madman lurking in The Dalles? The poisoning was an insane act, an act of violent hatred, carried on with subtle means. There must be such a person or persons with the motive and ability to assault this town, for it actually happened.

RAJNEESHPURAM: A group of people arrived in Wasco County in 1981. They are the followers of a native of India who calls himself the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. This man has attracted a worldwide following. They bought a 70,000-acre ranch in the southern end of the county, built a town called Rajneeshpuram, and began developing the property. There are

now about 2,000 adherents living in the town. They call themselves Rajneeshees.

The relations between the Rajneeshees and the adjoining ranchers has not been very good. There have also been conflicts between the Rajneeshees and the Wasco County authorities over such things as building permits and sanitation facilities. These and other conflicts have caused the establishment of the Rajneeshees to become a statewide issue.

Beginning in early September 1984 the Rajneeshees began recruiting from throughout the United States down-and-outers who lived on the skid rows of major cities. These street people began showing up, transported in buses by the Rajneeshees, around September 5. On the next day Rajneesh officials announced details of their program to bring 1,000 homeless to Rajneeshpuram. As the street people poured in, other residents of Wasco County became aroused. Among other things, they feared that the Rajneeshees would attempt to register and vote the street people in the coming election; possibly even elect county commissioners favorable to the Rajneeshees. Large protest meetings were held in The Dalles and other places. The issue became very hot and heavy, with both Rajneeshees and other Oregon citizens saying some very harsh things about each other.

The person who spoke for the Rajneeshees most frequently was a woman called Ma Anand Sheela, the personal secretary of the Bhagwan. On September 18 press reports quoted Ma Anand Sheela saying to a rally:

You tell your Governor, your attorney general and all the bigoted pigs outside that if one person on Rancho Rajneesh is harmed I will have 15 of their heads, and I mean it. You have given me no choice. Even though I am a nonviolent person I will do that.

Ma Anand Sheela has been photographed wearing a holster with a revolver in it.

On the next day, September 19, Ma Anand Sheela was again quoted in newspapers: “Wasco County is so bigoted it deserves to be taken over.”

There were a number of reports of people who threatened to come to Rajneeshpuram with shotguns. But there were no reports of people who actually did. Nor were there reports of any Rajneeshees who were harmed by outsiders. Nor were there any reports of Rajneeshees harming anyone else.

One of the things that first aroused my concern about the Rajneeshees was a statement I saw the Mayor of Rajneeshpuram make on a TV program. He said: “If we are forced to we will take over Oregon. If we are forced to.” Recently the same man, Swami Krishna Deva, was quoted by the Associated Press as saying: “If we need to take arms to battle bigotry, we will.”

The Rajneesh Medical Corporation has a well-equipped medical laboratory at Rajneeshpuram.

A final story. This story was told to the Subcommittee on Mining, Forest Management and BPA, which I chair, at a hearing I conducted in Portland, OR in December 1984. It is related by County Judge William Hulse of Wasco County.

On August 29, a few weeks before the salmonella outbreak, the three county commissioners of Wasco County drove down to Rajneeshpuram to make an inspection. They drove into Rajneeshpuram where they were stopped and asked to continue their inspection in a Rajneesh vehicle. As they got in, Ma Anand Sheela came to the van and said to them: “Snakes should sit in the back seats.”

Judge Hulse continued: “When we returned to our car, a tire was flat. The Rajneeshees agreed to fix the tire and as we waited by the car, someone from the Rajneesh medical laboratory brought us out a pitcher of water and three cups. We thanked her and drank the water. The tire was fixed and we drove back to The Dalles. Within about 8 hours I became violently ill, with some sort of stomach and bowel upset. Later I went to the hospital. I was in the hospital 2 days. The doctor said I might have died. Another county commissioner came down with what appeared to be the same thing, though he was not hospitalized. The third commissioner was considered by us to be sympathetic to the Rajneeshees. He did not get sick.”

Mr. Speaker, I conclude my story by calling for an intensive police investigation of the salmonella outbreak in The Dalles.

Appendix 3: The Rajneesh Cast of Characters

The following biographical information was assembled from a variety of sources, but the most important source was various investigative articles published in the *Oregonian* newspaper from June to December 1985.

ORIGINALLY COMPILED BY WIN MCCORMICK UPDATED BY ARIANA BOFFEY

AMITABH, Swami Prem, aka Robert Birnbaum, was one of the secondtier Rajneesh therapy group leaders under Swami Anand Teertha; others were Swami Anand Somendra, aka Michael Barnett, an English psychiatrist; Swami Prem Siddah, aka Leonard Zunin, a California psychiatrist; and Swami Anand Rajen, an uncredentialed English psychotherapist. Birnbaum received a PhD in clinical psychology from the University of California and had a private psychotherapy practice in Walnut Creek, a city in the San Francisco Bay Area, before attending a workshop on Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's system of "dynamic meditation" at the annual meeting of the American Humanistic Psychology Association in San Diego in spring 1974. At the time, he later wrote, his life "wasn't that much more joyful and alive than those persons I was seeing in my private practice," and the "shock of dynamic meditation was profound." Three months later, he became a sannyasin, joining what he would later call "the most broad-based therapeutic community in the world" in Pune (Poona), India. He subsequently became president and director of the Geetam Sannyas Ashram (Geetam, for short) in Lucerne Valley, California, the main Rajneesh therapy center in North America prior to the founding of Rajneeshpuram in Oregon. During the last half of the 1970s he shuttled between Pune and the United States. After Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh came to America, Amitabh became involved in the Rajneeshees' takeover of the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach (which they named the Utsava Rajneesh Meditation Center) and was the church's official minister until he defected from the cult in 1985, not long before the dissolution of the Oregon commune. Immediately after the

dissolution, he took back the name Robert Birnbaum and resumed the practice of psychotherapy.

ANUGITEN Swami, aka Richard K. Langford, originally from Syracuse, New York, was a weapons instructor and policeman at the ranch in Oregon. A member of the "Circle of 38," the personal security force that guarded Rajneesh, Langford participated in the plot to assassinate U.S. Attorney Charles Turner. He was arrested in Germany on September 4, 1990, and extradited on April 12, 1991, along with Prem Samadhi, aka Carol Matthews. On August 15, 1991, in Portland, he pleaded innocent to the charges against him: wiretapping and involvement in the plot to murder Turner. Later that month he changed his plea to guilty in exchange for a five-year sentence and dismissal of the firearms and wiretapping charges. As part of the deal, he agreed to testify against the other members of the plot to kill Turner. However, when he took the stand in 1995 against Sally Ann Croft, aka Prem Savita, and Susan Hagan, aka Ma Anand Su, he revealed that he was in love with Sally Ann Croft, with whom he had lived from 1981 to 1987, and remarked while testifying that he'd rather be anywhere else but testifying in the trial of these women. Langford was sentenced to five years in prison at the age of forty-one.

ARUP, Ma Prem, aka Maria Gemma Kortenhorst, was a Dutch woman responsible for the administration of the therapy and meditation programs in Pune (Poona), India, and at the ranch in Oregon. From a distinguished traditional Dutch Catholic family—her father was a successful international banker and her grandfather was for many years the president of the lower house of the Dutch parliament—she introduced human potential therapies into Holland in the early 1970s after spending a year in residence at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California. She became a Rajneesh disciple in 1974, the year the Shree Rajneesh Ashram in Pune was founded. In Pune, besides managing the therapy program, she was a personal secretary to Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, responsible for arranging his appointments with followers. During the Oregon period, she was president of Rajneesh International Meditation University, a director of Rajneesh Services International (RSI) in London, and was also responsible for coordination of the foreign Rajneesh centers, frequently traveling abroad on fund-raising trips with Ma Yoga

Sushila. Arup was considered by ordinary followers to be the least autocratic and most nurturing of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's female administrators. As a result, she was shut out of Ma Anand Sheela's innermost circle at the ranch and apparently was not involved in any of the more serious crimes perpetrated during Sheela's reign. She did not flee Rajneeshpuram with Sheela and others in September 1985. She was indicted on thirty-three counts of immigration fraud, but received only probation and a suspended sentence.

BHADRA, Ma Shanti, aka "Shanti B," aka Catherine Jane Paul Elsea, aka Catherine J. Lalo, aka Catherine Jane Stubbs, aka Jane Stork, was an Australian woman who served as treasurer of the Rajneesh Foundation International, vice president of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation, and a director of the Rajneesh Investment Corporation in Australia. A member of Ma Anand Sheela's inner circle, she attended meetings at Rancho Rajneesh with Sheela, Ma Anand Puja, Ma Anand Su (aka Susan Lissanevitch), Swami Krishna Deva, and Ma Yoga Vidya at which plans were discussed for the salmonella poisoning in The Dalles and for the murder of Swami Devaraj, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's personal physician. On July 6, 1985—according to her own admission—she went up behind Deveraj in the midst of a large meeting at the Rajneeshpuram meeting hall, Rajneesh Mandir, and injected him in the buttock with adrenalin from a hypodermic syringe. She left Rajneeshpuram on Sunday, September 16, 1985, the day after Ma Anand Sheela, Ma Anand Puja, and Ma Yoga Vidya left, and later joined Sheela and Puja in Germany, where all three were arrested together at the end of October. She (as well as Sheela and Puja) pleaded guilty to the attempted murder of Devaraj. She was released from prison in June 1987 after serving nine months of a ten-year sentence. She was arrested again in Germany in September 1990 for her participation in a conspiracy to murder U.S. Attorney Charles Turner. German courts refused to extradite her, accepting her claim that she had withdrawn from the alleged murder conspiracy. In 2005, however, at the age of sixty, she voluntarily returned to Portland to plead guilty to the conspiracy charge. She wanted to free herself of the international warrant against her so that she could visit her son, who had been diagnosed with terminal brain cancer, in Australia. She was sentenced to one year in jail and a $10,000 fine.

BODHIMITRA, Swami, aka Henry Gerhard, was the former minister of the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach (CRSLB) who, assisted by Rajneesh psychotherapist Swami Prem Amitabh, Rajneesh fund-raiser Ma Yoga Sushila, and Rajneesh attorney Swami Prem Niren, helped to engineer its takeover by Rajneesh forces. After studying the works of G. I. Gurdjieff and Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, Gerhard went to the Pune (Poona), India, ashram in 1979 and became a Rajneesh disciple. When he returned to his church, he began converting members of the Rajneesh fold and systematically driving non-Rajneesh Religious Scientists out of the congregation. He retired from the CRSLB in late 1980, turning over his ministry to a Rajneesh couple. The following spring, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh moved from India to the United States and the Rajneesh takeover of the of the CRSLB was launched. On April 23, 1985, Gerhard became the first person to be cremated in the Rajneeshpuram crematorium. Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh declared that Gerhard had died enlightened and would not be reincarnated.

DEEKSHA, Ma, aka Maria Grazia Mori, was a robust Italian woman whose fierce, authoritarian management of the kitchen facilities at the Shree Rajneesh Ashram in Pune (Poona), India, made her a legend within the Rajneesh movement. Called "the dragon master" by Rajneesh, she was in charge of renovating and managing "Rajneesh Castle" in New Jersey, where Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh lived from the beginning of June to the end of August 1981. She later told the *Oregonian* that Rajneesh's obsession in Montclair with adding to his collection of Rolls-Royces had disillusioned her. "This is the greatest shock of my life," the *Oregonian* quoted her as saying, "because I realized that he was a jerk. I realized that he was not enlightened." Deeksha defected from the movement in 1982, reportedly after a power struggle with Ma Anand Sheela.

DEVA, Swami Krishna, aka David Berry Knapp, was the former mayor of Rajneeshpuram and the Rajneesh official who, next to Ma Anand Sheela, took the most belligerent posture toward outsiders during Rajneeshpuram's heyday. The oldest child in a Jewish family of four in the affluent Chicago suburb of Highland Park, he once defended Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's apparent anti-Semitism in a letter to Oregon Magazine (see Appendix 1). Knapp attended the University of Southern California and received a

master's degree in psychology from a branch of the University of San Francisco. He worked as a marriage and family counselor before becoming a sannyasin (along with his sister Kathy, aka Ma Kavido, the former mayor of Antelope, who succeeded Ma Prem Karuna in that position). He was involved in the planning of the attempted murder of Swami Devaraj and in both the planning and execution of the plot to poison restaurant salad bars in The Dalles in 1984 with salmonella as the November elections for the seats on the Wasco County Court were approaching. (When Oregon Congressman Jim Weaver accused the Rajneeshees of having engineered the salmonella outbreaks, Knapp responded at a news conference by threatening that "fifteen Oregonians will die for every attack" on the group.) After Ma Anand Sheela fled Rajneeshpuram and Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh publicly accused her of a wide range of serious crimes in September 1985, Knapp turned state's evidence and was placed in the Federal Witness Protection Program. Information provided by him about the salmonella-poisoning plot and about the relationship of church and state inside Rajneeshpuram was particularly useful to prosecutors. In 1986, despite his cooperation and a recommendation from U.S. Attorney Charles Turner urging leniency, Knapp was sentenced by Judge B. Edward Leavy to two years in federal prison for conspiracy to commit immigration fraud. He was given five years probation on state racketeering charges.

DEVARAJ, Dr. Swami, aka George Alexander Stowell Wynne-Aubrey Meredith, was an English physician who worked in the Shree Rajneesh Ashram health center in Pune (Poona), India, and became Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's personal physician. He, along with Dr. Swami Shunyo, aka Philip Stanley Eichling, an American sannyasin doctor, was involved in providing false information to American authorities to justify Rajneesh's medical visa for entry into the United States. (Shunyo later was appointed an assistant medical examiner, responsible for conducting autopsies and signing death certificates at Rajneeshpuram). In the spring of 1984, Devaraj married Ma Prem Hasya, a wealthy sannyasin and rival to Ma Anand Sheela, who would succeed Sheela as Rajneesh's top personal secretary; around the same time, Devaraj was officially declared "enlightened" by Rajneesh. Soon afterward, there began a series of alleged attempts—engineered by Sheela—to poison Devaraj, culminating in an incident on July 6, 1981, during the Master's Day

celebration at the Third Annual World Festival at Rancho Rajneesh, for which Ma Shanti Bhadra and Ma Anand Puja, former secretary-treasurer of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation, all subsequently pleaded guilty. Devaraj accompanied Rajneesh on his flight to Charlotte, North Carolina, on October 28, 1985, and was charged with one felony count of aiding and abetting interstate flight to avoid prosecution; the charge against him was later dropped. He left the country with Bhagwan on November 14, 1985, and remained a faithful devotee until his master's death in 1990. He changed his name to Swami Prem Amrito and became the head of Osho International in London. He was in attendance when Rajneesh (Osho) died at the commune in Pune and signed his death certificate. It was Amrito who revealed Osho's desire to have an inner circle of disciples to "reach unanimous decisions about the continuous functioning and expansion of the commune and Osho's work." According to Amrito, Rajneesh began forming the group nine months before his death.

HASYA, Ma Prem, aka Francoise Ruddy, was briefly Ma Anand Sheela's successor as both president of the Rajneesh Foundation International (RFI) and top executive assistant to Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh in Oregon. Originally from France, and divorced from Albert Ruddy, the producer of *The Godfather*, Ruddy was part of a coterie of wealthy sannyasins at Rajneeshpuram nicknamed "the Beverley Hills clique." Other members of the clique were Ma Kaveesha, aka Joyce F. Scholzman, a sex therapist sometimes called "the Tantra Queen"; Kaveesha's nephew, Swami Anand David, aka David M. Levine, reputedly the heir to a shoe-store fortune; and Swami Dhyan John, aka John William Wally, a retired doctor and trust-fund heir. Ruddy also was said to be close to Swami Anand Teertha, the principal Rajneesh therapist. In 1982 and 1983, the group operated a recruiting center in Hollywood in an 11,000-square-foot mansion purchased by John, using Kaveesha's raunchy Tantra workshops as the lure to draw wealthy film-industry celebrities into the Rajneesh movement. In the spring of 1984, Ruddy married Swami Devaraj, Rajneesh's personal physician, perhaps helping to set in motion the series of attempts by Ma Anand Sheela and her agents to poison Devaraj that allegedly began soon afterward. Ruddy was at one point quarantined in the Rajneeshpuram medical clinic by Ma Anand Sheela. The Beverly Hills clique came to power at Rajneeshpuram

immediately after the departure of Sheela and other top Rajneesh officials on the weekend of September 14 and 15, 1985, when Ruddy replaced Sheela and John took control of the Rajneesh Investment Corporation, but their reign was short-lived. Ruddy and Devaraj were on the plane with Rajneesh when he tried to flee the country on October 28, 1985, and again accompanied him when he left the United States for India on November 14, after pleading guilty to immigration fraud. She remained loyal to Rajneesh (Osho) until his death in 1990. She now works at the Osho Academy in Sedona, Arizona, from which she acts as the international secretary of the Osho Commune International.

KARUNA, Ma Prem, aka Wendy Cutler Wyatt, was the Rajneesh mayor of the town of Antelope, Oregon, from 1983 to 1985. Born in Schenectady, New York, she received her master's and doctorate degrees in education from Boston University and worked as a teacher prior to becoming a Rajneesh disciple. In Pune (Poona), India, she was chancellor of Rajneesh International University. As mayor of Antelope, she presided over city council meetings in which the original residents of the town were cruelly taunted and harassed with tax increases and other measures. At Rajneeshpuram she was one of the main organizers of sham marriages between American and foreign disciples. She pleaded guilty in 1985 to one count of immigration fraud and was given a suspended sentence.

LAXMI, Ma Yoga, aka Laxmi Thakarsi Kuruwa, was an Indian woman who was Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's personal secretary and top executive assistant until she was replaced by Ma Anand Sheela in 1981, just before Rajneesh left India for the United States. Laxmi always spoke of herself in the third person. From a wealthy and politically well-connected family in Bombay, she was a social worker and secretary of the Bombay branch of the women's auxiliary council of India's Congress Party when she first met Acharya (teacher) Chandra Rajneesh in 1962 and was—literally—mesmerized by him. She later attended some of his infamous "meditation camps" (in which he experimented on participants with powerful techniques of hypnotic induction) and eventually became his close personal assistant. She apparently was a woman of great public relations skills. She is credited with conceiving the idea of Rajneesh calling himself "Bhagwan" (meaning

"Lord," "the Blessed One," or "God") and the idea of labeling his disciples "sannyasins" and requiring them to wear orange clothes and 108-bead necklaces, called "malas," with lockets displaying his picture; this he began to do in 1970, the year after he initiated Laxmi as his first disciple. She ran the Shree Rajneesh Ashram in Pune (Poona), India, from its establishment in 1974 to its downgrading in 1981. In 1981, after she had failed in repeated attempts to secure land in India for Rajneesh's projected utopian city of 10,000 people, Ma Anand Sheela displaced her by convincing Rajneesh to move to America. She was forced off Rancho Rajneesh early in its history and was not allowed to return until about a year before its demise. In an interview in early 1984, Laxmi told *Oregon Magazine* that, from the time she first met Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh until she left the ranch, she was unable to hold food down after eating. Despite her banishment, she remained devoutly loyal to her master. In the same interview with *Oregon Magazine*, she defended the Rajneeshees' activities in central Oregon by asking, "Has the coming of the Rajneeshees created any violence? Has any sannyasin done anything which can murder society? Can you give an example of those things?"

NIREN, Swami Prem, aka Philip (P.J.) Toelkes, was the chief lawyer for the American Rajneesh corporate entities and officers from fall 1981 to fall 1985. Toelkes was born in Tigard, Oregon, the son of a U.S. Postal Service worker, and raised in California as a Catholic. He graduated from the University of San Francisco law school and became the litigation partner in what would become the prestigious and politically powerful Los Angeles law firm of Manatt, Phelps, Rothenberg, and Tunney. Married with two children, Toelkes underwent a personal identity crisis in the late 1970s that caused him to leave his first wife and then the Manatt firm, and set off on a spiritual quest that eventually landed him at the Rajneesh ashram in Pune (Poona), India, in spring 1981, just before Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's departure for the United States. Toelkes first was recruited into Rajneesh legal work in September 1981 by Ma Anand Sheela in order to deal with the burgeoning dispute between Rajneeshees and old-line members at the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach (CRSLB) and was the legal tactician behind the Rajneeshees' successful legal takeover of CRSLB property and assets. He became director of the Rajneesh Legal Services Corporation when

it was incorporated in November 1981 and oversaw both Rajneesh defensive and offensive legal strategies in areas such as immigration, land-use, and libel law. He was once described by someone who knew him before his involvement with Rajneesh as "utterly ruthless" in his legal practice. During Rajneeshpuram's heyday, he was legally married to Ma Prem Isabel, aka Maria Isabel, a Chilean woman of French descent who was Rajneeshpuram's public relations director. He and Isabel received the tip from a still-anonymous source about Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's secret indictment on immigrationfraud charges that precipitated the cult leader's bungled attempt to flee the country on October 28, 1985. Toelkes briefly served as mayor of Rajneeshpuram following Ma Anand Sheela's departure the previous September. He subsequently changed his name back to Toelkes and went to Marin County, California, to live with Ma Prem Sunshine, aka Sunny Massad, a former assistant to Isabel. While there he founded the Institute for Justice and Human Rights, whose stated purpose was to clear Rajneesh's name of charges levied at him in the 1980s. He continues to practice law in California, and remains loyal to Rajneesh and the Osho Meditation Center, which he visits often. No legal charges have been pressed against him. Those most familiar with Rajneesh antics in America—legal and otherwise—consider Toelkes to be "the one that got away."

PUJA, Ma Anand, aka Diane Ivonne Onang, was the secretary-treasurer of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation at Rajneeshpuram who, under the direction of Ma Anand Sheela, was directly or indirectly responsible for at least the following: the poisoning of Jefferson County District Attorney Michael C. Sullivan; the poisoning of Wasco County Court commissioners William Hulse and Raymond Matthews; the drugging of street people brought to Rancho Rajneesh by the Share-A-Home program; the drugging of various commune members, including Ma Yoga Vivek and Swami Devaraj; and the spreading of salmonella food poisoning in The Dalles. A native of the Philippines, she was trained as a nurse in California and had worked in California and the Philippines before going to the Shree Rajneesh Ashram in Pune (Poona), India in 1979. There, she became the ashram's medical coordinator and director of the ashram health center where, among other things, numerous abortions and sterilizations were performed. She also treated Swami Prem Chinmaya, aka Marc Harris Silverman, Sheela's first

husband, who allegedly died in the ashram health center of Hodgkin's disease at the age of twenty-two, in 1980. In Oregon, besides running the Rajneesh Medical Corporation, she was a director and vice president of the Rajneesh Foundation International. She ordered bacterial cultures of a number of organisms that cause food poisoning in humans in October 1983, and spent much of the next year perfecting a strain of salmonella bacteria inside a secret laboratory at the ranch. In July 1987, along with Sheela, she pleaded guilty to state and federal charges relating to the attempted murder of Swami Devaraj, the poisoning of commissioners Hulse and Matthews, the salmonella poisonings in The Dalles, and Sheela's massive wiretapping operation at Rajneeshpuram; she was sentenced to jail and served twenty-nine months. She and Sheela were released early for good behavior.

When investigators went into the Rajneesh commune in fall 1985, they unearthed two biological warfare laboratories in which Onang had been experimenting with various germs and poisons. Among other experiments, the woman who had unleashed the largest per capita outbreak of salmonella poisoning in the history of the United States had been trying to culture a live AIDS virus.

SAVITA, Ma Prem, aka Sally Anne Croft, an English woman and professional accountant, was the chief financial manager for the Rajneesh movement from 1977 to 1985. She resigned as treasurer of several Rajneesh organizations and left Rajneeshpuram on Sunday, September 14, 1985, the day after Ma Anand Sheela fled to Europe. Although ranked by many as second in power only to Sheela at the ranch, Savita/Croft, for a while, managed to avoid indictment by scrupulously avoiding public attention. However, her deeds caught up with her in 1990 when she was indicted for her participation in the plot to kill U.S. Attorney Charles Turner. She and Susan Hagan, aka Ma Anand Su, resisted extradition from England but were finally extradited back to Oregon in 1994. In 1995 both women were convicted of conspiring to murder Turner and sentenced to five years in jail. Croft and Hagan were released before their sentences were up on account of "good behavior." In December of 2000, Croft returned voluntarily to Oregon with Hagan to face the one remaining charge against her, that of illegal wiretapping. She was given suspended probation for her offense because, according to the judge, she had led a "meaningful life" since her release from prison.

SHEELA, Ma Anand, aka Sheela Silverman, aka Sheela Ambalal Patel, was Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's chief executive assistant during his four-year, three-month stay in Oregon, and, until almost the end, the person responsible for administering his various corporate organizations and implementing his policies.

Born December 12, 1948, in Baroda, a city some two hundred miles north of Bombay in the state of Gujarat in western India, she was the sixth and last child in her family. Her father, Ambalal C. Patel, was a moderately prosperous local businessman and farmer. The Patels in general are an Indian caste or clan native to Gujarat who are known for their skill in commerce. In the nineteenth century, the British recruited large numbers of Patels from Gujarat to man plantations in their East African colonies, where the Patels eventually became merchants—the "Jews of Africa." In the 1960s, East Indian merchants became persona non grata in the newly independent nations of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, and a mass migration of Patels to the United States—facilitated by liberal U.S. immigration laws at the time—commenced. Under those laws, a foreigner with $40,000 or more in capital who promised to invest it in the United States could gain "accelerated immigration status." Patels entering the country under this provision chose to invest their capital in real estate, particularly hotels and motels, and by the 1980s were said to control nearly $6 million worth of small motels. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service long suspected that the $40,000 kitties were being recycled numerous times in order to multiply the number of Patels able to enter the country; moreover, the "capital" loophole was subject to further pyramiding as well, because once one Patel managed to procure a green card, his close relatives—or reputed close relatives—also were eligible to enter the United States. It is thus not clear that all the people in the United States calling themselves "Patel" were really born with that name.

Patels living abroad—even those whose families have been away from India for virtually an entire century now—still keep in close touch with the relatives in the home province of Gujarat. During the Rajneeshees' stay in central Oregon from 1981 to 1985, a few journalists tried to make something of Sheela's Patel connection. No one was ever able to prove anything concrete or significant, but certain facts still intrigue. Two of the main Patel centers in the United States are Chicago and San Francisco—and one of

Sheela's brothers, Bipin (who with another brother and sister moved from India to the United States in 1965, just as the great Patel migration to America was getting under way), has lived in the Chicago area, while another brother, Rohit, has lived in Oakland, across the bay from San Francisco. Bipin is known to travel at least occasionally to East Africa. Also, Bipin was involved in the Rajneeshees' purchase of the Big Muddy Ranch in June 1981; according to the *Oregonian*, at one point he had Sheela make out two checks drawn on a Rajneesh account related to the purchase in the name of Hament R. Patel, a cousin of theirs in Mombasa, Kenya, who, along with Bipin, was a trustee of a Bahamian-chartered investment company called Gopi Investments. Finally, certain segments of the Patel clan in Gujarat (a coastal province) are said to be involved in the smuggling trade, and there have been a number of Rajneesh followers arrested on smuggling charges, including drug and currency smuggling. It was long rumored that Patels were involved in financing Rajneesh's career.

Sheela's immediate family apparently opened their doors in Baroda to a wide variety of unorthodox philosophical, political, and religious views. They also, according to her testimony, "spoiled me rotten." Reportedly, her father, Ambalal, first introduced her to Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (as well as to another guru, J. Krishnamurti) when she was seventeen. Both her parents would become Rajneesh disciples (her brother Bipin, despite being involved in some Rajneesh financial transactions, would not). In February 1984, as the INS investigation of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's immigration status was beginning to tighten, Swami Swarupananda (Ambalal) and Ma Swarupa (Sheela's mother) appeared at the Portland INS office, announced that they had secretly adopted Chandra Mohan Rajneesh when he was six years old, and applied for permanent resident status for their "son" (they themselves already being permanent residents of the United States).

In 1968, the same year her father introduced her to Rajneesh, Sheela set off for America. She went initially to Chicago, where she stayed with Bipin, and then to Verona, New Jersey, where Rohit and a sister were living. (Again, it is interesting to note that the movement of members of the Ambalal Patel family from Gujarat to America seems to have coincided with the beginnings of the migration of Patels from East Africa to the United States.) In New Jersey she enrolled at Montclair State College, where she studied intermittently from fall 1969 to spring 1971. She and her first husband, Marc

Harris Silverman, whom she met at the college, were married on June 20, 1969. Sheela and Marc became sannyasins at a Rajneesh meditation camp in India in February 1973; Sheela took the Rajneesh name of Ma Anand and Marc became Swami Prem Chinmaya. In 1975, Sheela and Chinmaya, together with Maya Patel, Sheela's sister, and Vasant Joshi, her brother-in-law (and a biographer of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh), incorporated the Chidvilas Rajneesh Meditation Center, a nonprofit corporation, in Union County, New Jersey; it was reincorporated two years later in 1977 (the year the nonprofit Rajneesh Foundation, also with Joshi as one of its incorporators, was set up in California). It was Chidvilas that, in May 1981, purchased the Rhine-style castle in Montclair where Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh first went to live after leaving India; it also was Chidvilas that, a month later, purchased the 64,000-acre ranch in central Oregon that would become the site of the controversial and doomed city of Rajneeshpuram.

The establishment of Chidvilas notwithstanding, Sheela and Chinmaya spent the second half of the 1970s at Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's ashram in Pune (Poona), India, where Sheela became chief assistant to Ma Yoga Laxmi, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's top executive secretary. (Sheela reportedly edged out Ma Prem Arup for the position of Laxmi's successor.) Chinmaya died in Pune—allegedly of Hodgkin's disease—on June 11, 1980. Sheela then married John Joseph Shelfer, aka Swami Prem Jayananda, on January 26, 1981, on an airplane flight from India to the United States.

When Ma Yoga Laxmi's search for land in India for the new, larger commune that Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh wanted to establish ended in failure, Sheela swiftly usurped Laxmi's position and persuaded Rajneesh to move to the United States. With the assistance of her brother Bipin, she selected the Big Muddy Ranch (soon renamed Rancho Rajneesh) in central Oregon as the site for the new community and arranged its purchase by the Rajneesh Foundation International for $6.5 million.

In Oregon, Sheela functioned not only as chief administrator for all Rajneesh operations but also as chief spokesperson for the cult, carrying on a bitter four-year war of words with the group's increasingly numerous critics and opponents. In 1984, after court decisions regarding the legality of the incorporation of the city of Rajneeshpuram began to go against the Rajneesh cult, the war turned serious. In February of that year, Rajneesh security forces began arming themselves with lethal attack weapons. That July, Sheela

reportedly held a brainstorming session in Jesus Grove, the section of Rancho Rajneesh where she lived and worked, attended by Ma Anand Puja, secretary-treasurer of the Rajneesh Medical Corporation, Swami Krishna Deva, mayor of Rajneeshpuram, Ma Ava AVALOS, Sheela's personal secretary, and others, to discuss how to prevent voters in Wasco County from reaching the polls in November. (If the incorporation of Rajneeshpuram were overturned, the issue would go back to the Wasco County Court for reconsideration, and two of the three seats on the commission were up in those elections.) The method decided on was poison. Some time after the meeting, Ma Anand Jagruti, aka Bonnie May Barlow, aka Bonnie M. Haskell, was sent to The Dalles, the Wasco County seat, with a vial of salmonella bacteria (the Rajneesh Medical Corporation had begun ordering salmonella and other bacterial cultures from medical-supply laboratories as far back as October 1, 1983), but ended up flushing it down a motel toilet. The next month, Sheela, Puja, and Krishna Deva took salmonella bacteria to a grocery store in The Dalles; reportedly, Sheela exclaimed, "Let's go have some fun!" before pouring salmonella over lettuce in the store. Apparently, no one got sick as a result of that initial August experiment. However, later in the month, two Wasco County Court commissioners were poisoned with salmonella by Sheela and Puja while on a visit to Rajneeshpuram; in September, during two outbreaks of salmonella poisoning in The Dalles resulting from salmonella bacteria placed in the food in the salad bars of various restaurants, approximately 750 people were afflicted. These outbreaks occurred while the Rajneeshees were importing thousands of street people into Rajneeshpuram and attempting to register them to vote under their infamous Share-A-Home program.

The Share-A-Home program—which failed when the Oregon secretary of state established rigorous screening procedures for potential new voters in Wasco Country—was the beginning of the end for Sheela, Sheela's antics, and the whole Rajneesh experiment in Oregon. After its termination, she began spending most of her time away from the ranch on a series of globetrotting trips. On December 14, 1984, in Mexico City, she married Swiss sannyasin Swami Dhyan DIPO, aka Urs Birnstiel, a consultant to Rajneesh Services International (RSI), then the international Rajneesh financial umbrella in London; only afterward did she try—and ultimately fail—to obtain a backdated divorce from John Shelfer in Nepal. Her marriage to

Dipo did not prevent her from becoming publicly involved that spring in Australia with a leading local entrepreneur named Jay Harmon, who was attempting to develop the Karri Valley resort in western Australia into a major Rajneesh commune. Rumors abounded that Sheela was seeking a new home for the cult, or at least for herself. (That spring, according to information provided to *Oregon Magazine* by the mother of a member of the group, a small, select group of sannyasins in Europe was secretly dispatched to build a cabin with a capacity for about twenty people in the woods above Waldshut, a town near Freiburg, West Germany, about two hours north of Dipo's home in Zurich.)

The day before the November 1984 elections, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh had broken his four-and-a-half-year purported "vow of silence" and begun speaking publicly again. In the summer of 1985, he dramatically picked up the pace of his public speaking, giving a series of press conferences in which he bitterly denounced his opponents in Oregon and Oregonians in general. On Monday, September 16, he held another major press conference—but this time he denounced Sheela and her "gang of fascists" instead, accusing them of attempting to poison his personal doctor and dentist, his mistress, the Jefferson County district attorney and The Dalles water supply; in subsequent press conferences, he also accused her of poisoning Wasco County Court Commissioner William Hulse, causing the salmonella outbreak in The Dalles, setting fire to the Wasco County planning office, and creating a massive electronic eavesdropping system at Rajneeshpuram that invaded even his own privacy. It would be reported that in late May and June of that year, Sheela, with the assistance of Ma Shanti Bhadra and Ma Yoga Vidya, also had plotted to assassinate U.S. Attorney Charles Turner, Oregon Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer, and others. The group supposedly had traveled to Texas to buy guns for the plot, and gone so far as to stake out Turner's house in suburban Portland.

Rajneesh claimed to have had no knowledge of any of these activities of Sheela until the weekend before the dramatic press conference in which he revealed them to the world. On the previous Friday, September 13, Sheela had supposedly summoned select disciples and announced that she was leaving the commune because Rajneesh had become more interested in Rolls-Royces and expensive watches than his commune or his disciples. That afternoon she resigned from the presidency of the Rajneesh Foundation

International and appointed as her successor Ma Prem Hasya (supposedly her rival, and the wife since spring 1984 of Swami Devaraj, Rajneesh's personal doctor, whom she had allegedly tried to kill). The next day, Saturday, September 14, she, Puja and Vidya received a warm good-bye from other sannyasins when they left the ranch in one of the commune's private airplanes on their way to Seattle en route to Zurich, Switzerland, via Frankfurt. Sheela's brother Bipin reportedly was at the ranch when she left (and had been there for at least a month). Four days before Sheela landed in Zurich, Dhyan Dipo had moved out of his apartment and into the Kota Rajneesh Neo-Sannyas Cooperative in Zurich. Sheela reportedly spent her first night abroad across the border in Freiburg, where Dipo joined her the next day. Only on Sunday, September 15, the day after Sheela and her cohorts left Rancho Rajneesh—so Rajneesh's story went—did other sannyasins come forth and inform him of her crimes.

In the weeks before Sheela's departure, a grand jury in Portland had stepped up its investigation of her, Rajneesh, and other residents of Rajneeshpuram for violations of immigration law. On Thursday, October 24, the grand jury secretly indicted Rajneesh; the following Monday, October 28, after learning of the indictment, Rajneesh attempted to flee the country by plane but was arrested in Charlotte, North Carolina. Almost simultaneously, Sheela, Puja, and Shanti Bhadra were arrested at a resort in Waldshut. While Rajneesh was allowed to leave the United States legally after a slap on the wrist, the three women were extradited to the United States in February 1986. The following summer, they reached a plea bargain with the federal and state authorities. Sheela pleaded guilty to state and federal charged relating to immigration fraud, the salmonella epidemics and the attempted murder of Devaraj. She was sentenced to four and a half years on the federal charges and twenty years on state charges. She served twenty-nine months in a California prison and was deported to Germany following her release. She now lives in Switzerland, is married to a Swiss national, and for this reason has been able to elude extradition. In 1999, she was tried in a Swiss court and sentenced to time already served and is therefore unreachable by U.S. or Interpol warrants if she were to leave Switzerland. She was arrested in Germany on an Interpol warrant after a television appearance marking the anniversary of Rajneesh's death, but was quickly released when German

officials were notified of the Swiss court's decision. She now runs two nursing homes in Switzerland under the name Sheela Birnsteil.

SHIVAMURTI, Swami, aka Hugh Milne, was an English osteopath who served as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's personal bodyguard for almost a decade. When he defected from the cult in 1982, he wrote in the German magazine *Stern*: "Rajneesh is directing an unscrupulous international multimillion-dollar enterprise: Individuals or groups that are in the way of his ambition are being fought in an inhuman manner. His vision of the world consists of the fact that only he and his followers are the heirs of the earth. . . . Does this sound familiar?" He has since written a full account of his Rajneesh experiences, *Bhagwan: The God That Failed*, published by St. Martin's Press. In it he claims that, among other things, Ma Anand Sheela is sexually frigid. And, to quote a *Newsweek* review: "At one point, he portrays the guru stoned on laughing gas and babbling away with tubes up his nose. This glimpse of Rajneesh—neither buffoon nor bogeyman but simply pathetic—is the oddest revelation of all."

SU, Ma Anand, aka Susan Hagan, aka Susan Lissanevitch, was an English sannyasin high up in the Rajneesh hierarchy and involved in the wiretapping scheme and the plot against U.S. Attorney Charles Turner. Along with Ma Prem Savita, she fought extradition for years but finally lost, and was sentenced in 1995 to five years in jail. She and Savita were released in 1998 for good behavior. At the age of fifty-one, she returned to Portland of her own volition to plead guilty to the wiretapping charge left against her, and was given suspended probation.

SUSHILA, Ma Yoga, aka Susan Wallach, aka Sushila Tribe, was the top fund-raiser for Rajneesh Foundation International in America until her defection or excommunication from the Rajneesh movement in 1984. Born Susan Wallach in Chicago, she reportedly worked as a social worker in the Zionist youth movement and the Jewish community in Chicago prior to joining Rajneesh in India in 1972, two years before he established his ashram in Pune (Poona), India, (which would make her, along with Swami Anand Teertha, one of Rajneesh's earliest Western disciples). She was director of Rajneesh Services International in London, the worldwide financial umbrella

for the Rajneesh movement, and a director of the Geetam Center in Lucerne Valley, California. In the latter capacity, she appears to have been the prime mover and strategist behind the Rajneesh takeover of the Church of Religious Science of Laguna Beach. Her leaving the Rajneesh fold reportedly resulted from a rivalry with Ma Anand Sheela.

TEERTHA, Swami Anand, aka Paul Lowe, was the major Rajneesh therapy group leader in Pune (Poona), India, and the one who developed the basic Rajneesh encounter group format. An uncredentialed English psychotherapist, Lowe in the late 1960s founded Quaesitor, a human potential growth center in London modeled on the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California. When Michael Murphy, cofounder of Esalen, led an Esalen delegation to London in the early ’70s, Lowe took particular interest in an encounter group workshop offered by Will Shultz, who at Esalen had developed and popularized the confrontational encounter group style of the ’60s. Subsequently, Lowe learned Synanon-style confrontation techniques from Denny Yuson, a former drug addict who had been a resident and then a group leader at Phoenix House, a residential drug-rehabilitation program in New York City loosely modeled on Synanon. Lowe followed Yuson to Pune, where he adopted the name Lowe and amalgamated and extended Esalen and Synanon techniques, forging an encounter format that became notorious for its unprecedented utilization of interpersonal violence. When the Rajneesh community moved from Pune to Oregon in 1981, the psychotherapy and meditation groups that had made the Rajneesh ashram an apparent human potential mecca were de--emphasized and Lowe’s public role diminished. After the breakup of the commune, he returned to England to revive Quaesitor. Lowe was one of the earliest of Rajneesh’s closest disciples to leave his master, claiming to be enlightened himself and seeking followers of his own. About Lowe, Rajneesh said before his death in 1990:

> Lowe has become a mini-guru. He knows nothing about enlightenment. He has never meditated. Here he was involved with his [therapy] groups, which have nothing to do with meditation. And I have told these therapists, “You should meditate,” but it was against their egos, because they were therapists. Thirty or forty people were joining their groups,

and they were the leaders. To meditate with the same people was against their egos, so they never meditated.

VIDYA, Ma Yoga, aka Phyllis McCarthy, was South African mathematician in charge of personnel assignments at the Pune (Poona), India, ashram and at Rajneeshpuram. Born in Johannesburg of German parents, she received college degrees from the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa and Kings College, University of London. Before becoming a Rajneesh follower, she worked as a systems analyst for IBM in South Africa and various computer firms in London and in farm management in the Netherlands. She did not arrive in Pune until the late 1970s, but reportedly became an ally there of Ma Anand Sheela, who would later usurp the position of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's top executive assistant from Ma Yoga Laxmi. In 1983, Vidya became the second president of the Rajneesh Neo-Sannyas International Commune (legally, the corporate organization that furnished the workforce for the construction and maintenance of the city of Rajneeshpuram), succeeding Ma Prem Homa, aka Michele Therese Mannel, an American originally from Camden, New Jersey, who went on to become office manager for Rajneesh Legal Services Corporation and municipal judge for the city of Rajneeshpuram. Vidya was known among sannyasins for her extremely autocratic personality. ("It was usually very bitchy women, like Vidya, who ran things [at Rajneeshpuram]," one ex-disciple has said.) She left Rajneeshpuram for Europe with Ma Anand Sheela and Ma Anand Puja on September 13, 1985, reportedly remarking as she left, "I don't trust Bhagwan enough to go to jail." She was indicted on the same thirty-three counts of immigration fraud as Sheela. Although she was arrested with Sheela and Puja in West Germany in October 1985, she was not extradited to the United States because she had become a German citizen. However, she returned voluntarily from South Africa at the age of fifty-five, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to murder U.S. Attorney Charles Turner, and received one year in jail and a $10,000 fine.

VIVEK, Ma Yoga, aka Christine Woolf, an Englishwoman, was Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's mistress beginning in 1973. Rajneesh told his followers that she was the reincarnation of his childhood sweetheart, who died when he

was seventeen. (The girlfriend died in 1948; Woolf was born in 1949.) He convinced her so thoroughly of this that she recalled "memories" of this past life, and recounted to a reporter for *Sannyasin Magazine* that in her former life she had begged Rajneesh to bring her spirit back after she died. These memories, however, had actually been told to her by Rajneesh, thus bringing their accuracy into question. Nonetheless, she continued to believe that the memories were entirely legitimate.

Supposedly, Ma Anand Sheela had plotted to kill Vivek. Vivek returned to India with Rajneesh in 1985, but eventually left the commune. She was found dead from an overdose of sleeping pills on December 9, 1989, two day's before the guru's fifty-eighth birthday and one month before his own death.

YOGINI DHYAN, aka Alma Peralta, a native of Tucson, Arizona, was Ma Anand Sheela's former bodyguard. Her confession sparked the indictment of the eight members of the plot to kill U.S. Attorney Charles Turner. Before she confessed, there was not enough evidence to support a case against the members of the plot to assassinate Turner. In return for her cooperation, she received only two years in prison.

“He who does not punish evil commands it to be done.”

— LEONARDO DA VINCI

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NOTE: I have not footnoted the sources for this book or the previous edition; perhaps in a future edition I will accomplish that. In the meantime, most of the original sources used for my articles can be found in the Win McCormack Rajneesh Collection at the University of Oregon Library in Eugene, Oregon.

Win McCormack
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